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Optimizing Team Performance: Analytical Models, Communication Strategies, and Mental Health Insights

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CONTENTS

1. TEAM DEFINITION

1.1. Introductory aspects

Teamwork is a great success for many organizations, a success that includes increased productivity, improved product quality and not least increased levels of creativity and innovation among employees. Today, in many areas of activity, teamwork is preferred. The success of an organization, be it private or public interest, is no longer defined in terms of the individual performance of its employees, but by its ability to create teams that make the most of the individual skills of its employees to achieve the best results.

On the other hand, teamwork can, in certain circumstances, lead to increased job satisfaction for employees. In this respect, recent studies conducted in Australia (Thurm, 2005), have shown that teamwork has benefits for both employees and the organization.

From the outset we draw attention to the fact that simply organizing employees into teams does not guarantee an increase in efficiency and organizational benefits. In this sense, the duty and task of managers is to create and develop those internal conditions and processes (activities) that lead or enable the team to be successful. It is also important to note that teamwork does not mean delegating tasks to the shoulders of one or two members and the rest take the benefits and praise. Working in this way will obviously lead to a lot of dissatisfaction and conflict. For best results, everyone's tasks should be clearly defined from the start, based on what they do best. Throughout the project, team members must communicate effectively, and any dissatisfaction will be resolved through communication.

Teamwork, however, is not suited to everyone, although there are multiple benefits of multi-person work. If done properly, teamwork leads to excellent results.

In short, the main benefits of teamwork can be summarized as follows:

1. Tasks/activities will be completed much faster – compared to the situation where these tasks/activities compared to doing them individually.

2. The end result can be much better than an individually developed project (sharing information and ideas together) – because more eyes and more opinions mean diversification and getting the best idea in the end.

3. Those who are new to the job will have the chance to accumulate new professional knowledge and skills much better – often the team will be made up of employees with varying degrees of seniority and experience in the job/field.

4. You will have the opportunity to 'steal' (to learn) from the experience of highly experienced employees – the opportunity to learn from the experience and professionalism of colleagues

5. You will learn about helping and being helped. Always, in a project/task/ activity involving more than one person, everyone needs each other's help. Without helping and being helped, the result of teamwork will be failure.

6. Teamwork fosters healthy competition. Although there is a common goal, none of the members will want to be less than the others, so each member will be motivated to perform at their best with the tasks they have been given.

7. You have the chance to show what you can do professionally – teamwork gives each team member the opportunity to demonstrate how good they are professionally and the opportunity to stand out with a particular contribution/idea, which will certainly be noticed by the boss.

Conceptually, a team is defined as a union of two or more people who interact and coordinate their own work and activities in order to achieve or accomplish objectives or goals (Lason & LaFasto, 1989) . In the following we will formulate further definitions of the team concept:

1. A team is made up of a small number of people with complementary skills, who share the same goals and have a common approach to work.

2. A team is a group of people with different skills and tasks, working together on a project or jointly carrying out tasks/activities, supporting each other in the way they work and providing mutual support.

It should be noted that these definitions emphasize 3 team-related aspects, namely:

1. the team consists of 2 or more people;

2. team involves regular interaction and coordination between people (team members);

3. the people in the team (team members) share or adhere to the same goals and objectives.

On the other hand, we would like to point out that teamwork has its disadvantages. In this respect, the main disadvantages to be aware of when working in a team are:

1. The danger of suffocation of individuality or personality;
2. The time and material costs of building a team;
3. Decisions can be made based on keeping team members happy and not rationally and logically based;
4. The danger of group pressure may lead to different types of conflict.

Last but not least, in conclusion, we consider that the role and function of a team is to engage in solving problems and certain tasks within the organization, to participate in improving organizational functioning and performance while ensuring an adequate level of motivation and job satisfaction of employees.

1.2. Team vs. group of people

Although generally speaking a team is a group of people, the terms 'team' and 'group' are rarely used interchangeably. For example: a worker, a teacher, a coach and a doctor put together can form a group, but not a team. The difference between a group and a team can be seen from the following key points:

1. **Interaction and interdependence**: A group is defined as two or more individuals interacting to achieve certain goals or to satisfy certain needs. In contrast, a team is a formal working group characterized by a high level of interaction among its members, working together to achieve a specific common goal. Thus, all teams are groups, but not all groups are teams.
2. **Aims and goals**: Groups can exist without a clearly defined common goal, their members having individual interests. Teams, on the other hand, have well-defined goals and their members work together to achieve these common goals.
3. **Roles and responsibilities**: In a team, roles are clearly defined, and members take on specific responsibilities to contribute to collective success. In groups,

these roles may be less structured, and responsibilities may be distributed unevenly or unclearly.

4. **Cooperation and coordination**: Teams require a high degree of cooperation and coordination between team members because tasks are interdependent. In groups, tasks can be accomplished individually without requiring close cooperation between members.

5. **Performance and Effectiveness**: Teams tend to outperform individually, making more effective use of members' skills and responding better to changes in the environment. Teamwork can also increase member motivation and involvement.

From a certain point of view, the difference between a team and a group lies in the way of approaching the relationships between the members, i.e. the way of approaching the activities to be carried out. Thus, in the case of teamwork, the approach to these aspects is concretized by:

– Better and earlier planning of goals, i.e. developing and detailing action plans.
– There is good communication between team members, formal and direct communication.
– The leader is a good team motivator.
– The whole team actively participates in solving the problems that arise (there is no such thing as "I don't want to").
– All members feel part of the team and have the support of the team members.

Therefore, although the terms "group" and "team" are often used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts in the context of organization and human behavior. A team is an advanced form of group, characterized by close collaboration, clear common goals and high interdependence among its members (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. *Differences between team and group*

Group of persons	Team of employees
Leadership may be informal or shared, and often lacks clear structure	Has a well-defined leader in terms of prerogatives and power
Focus on empowering the individual	Team empowerment orientation
Goal-oriented and self-interested	Goal-oriented and group-oriented

Individual task-oriented	Group task-oriented
Products and services performed individually	Products and services performed by the group
Measuring efficiency through rather indirect methods – personal influence and contribution to business objectives (financial performance)	Measuring efficiency through rather direct methods – evaluating the team's collective work
Rather delegated discussions, decisions and activities at the level of individuals	Team discussions, decisions and shared activities (involving all or part of the team)

(Adapted: (Katzenbach & Smith, 1995, p. 118)

On the other hand, the differences between the team and the group can also be highlighted as follows (Table 1.2)

Table 1.2. *Main differences between group and team*

Size	Group vs. Teams
SYNERGY	A team will always manage to do more than the sum of its parts, while a group will perform worse than the sum of its parts.
TRUST	Trust and respect are the foundation of relationships in a team, whereas in a group trust can only be found at the level of sub-groups (churches).
COMMON OBJECTIVES	Members of a team work together to achieve agreed and agreed objectives. In a group, individual agendas are more important than any common goal.
COMMUNICATION	Team members know how to listen, ask questions and give feedback. In a group, communication may be chaotic, with interruptions, side conversations, and lack of clarity
LEADERSHIP	Leadership is vital in a team, given the problems of forecasting, planning, coordinating and controlling team activity. In a group everything is confused, with diverse personalities fighting for dominance.
DIFFERENT VALUATION	Differences between individuals are valued and respected as this is where synergy emerges. In a group, differences are seen as potential threats, generating tensions and negative emotions.

RESPONSIBILITY	In a team, being accountable involves taking failure and learning from it. In a group, the guilty are sought out for punishment.
CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT	A team tends to look for unconventional solutions, to develop and progress. A group will not move beyond repeating past mistakes.
EDUCATION and FUN	In a team, the learning process blends harmoniously with the fun part, leading to stronger relationships. Learning is ignored in groups; fun is more important.

Therefore 'team' is not another term or word for 'group'. As mentioned, team means common goals and objectives, and responsibility is collective.

2. APPROACHES (MODELS)
FOR ANALYZING TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Generally speaking, there are various models and theories that aim to explain the factors behind effective team functioning. In this sense, the main approaches (models and theories) related to team functioning are:

1. The Input-Process-Output model

2. The Input-Mediator-Output model

2.1. The Input-Process-Output model (IPO model)

This model is based on the system's approach, i.e. the approach which, in general, considers that immediate outputs (output) and outcomes (outcome) are obtained as a result of a process of transformation of inputs (input).

In the case of our model (Fig. 2.1):

1. **Inputs** describe antecedent (influencing) factors that enable and/or constrain the level of communication and member interactions. These inputs can consist of:

    (1) individual characteristics of the team members (level of personal skills and abilities, different types of personalities).

    (2) team-related factors (types and structure of tasks, type of leader and his involvement and influence).

    (3) organizational factors (e.g. type of organization and organizational culture).

    (4) contextual factors (complexity and level of interaction with different types of environments).

2. **Processes refer to the interactions and activities carried out by team members** directed towards accomplishing or realizing team tasks and objectives. The process is obviously influenced by the way different antecedents combine. Processes are important because they describe how team inputs (antecedent factors) are transformed into outputs.

3. **Output refers to the aspects that describe the results** and by-products of the team's work. Broadly speaking, these may include team performance (e.g. quality and quantity of work) and/or members' affective reactions (e.g. level of satisfaction or commitment, level of burnout and motivation).
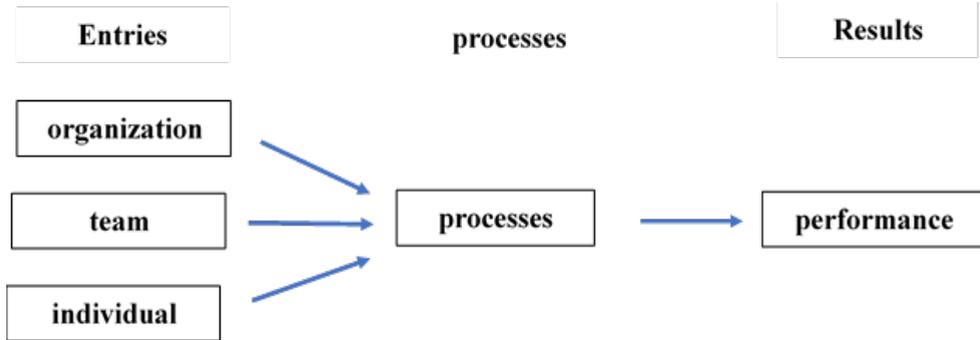
Figure 2.1. *The IPO team efficiency model*
(adapted from (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990)

In relation to this model, a number of experts in the field (Cohen & Bailey, What makes teams work: Group effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite, 1997) consider that input factors can be defined and categorized as (1) team influencing factors and (2) compositional contributions. On the other hand, this model emphasizes the multi-level character of the team.

On the other hand, the IPO model has been criticized for failing to distinguish several types of team-related "processes" and outcomes, i.e. not clearly identifying all the antecedents of outcomes. On the other hand, a number of scholars have pointed out through their studies that many of the influencing (mediating) factors involved in influencing team outcomes are not related to team processes.

2.2. Input-Mediator-Output model (IMO model)

The I-M-O (Input-Mediator-Output) model is a conceptual framework used to analyze the effectiveness of teams, highlighting the relationships between factors that influence collective performance. This model extends the older I-P-O (Input-Process-Output) model by placing greater emphasis on the mechanisms by which initial factors (inputs) affect outcomes through mediators.

This model also starts from a systemic view, but with a different approach than the first model. This model takes explanatory analysis of 3 major aspects, namely (Fig. 2.2):

A. There are a number of aspects or factors, generically called mediators, that intervene in the team process whereby a number of antecedent factors (input) influence the team's outcomes (output). According to this model, mediators, broadly speaking, are composed of both team process aspects (involving actions by team members) and other mediating mechanisms – mechanisms that are in the psychological domain of the team and are better defined as aspects of cognitive, motivational or affective states. The authors of the model referred to the latter mediators as emergent states (e.g., potency, psychological safety, and collective affect). Thus **Inputs** (I – Inputs) can be the resources and initial conditions that influence the team. These include:

1. Individual characteristics: skills, experience, motivation.
2. Team characteristics: team size, diversity, cohesion.
3. Contextual factors: organizational culture, leadership, available resources.

On the other hand, **Mediators** (M – Mediators) can be the processes and team dynamics that influence how inputs are transformed into outputs. Examples:

1. Team-centered processes: communication, coordination, decision making.
2. Emerging states: team cohesion, trust, commitment.

Finally, **Outputs** (O – Outputs) are the results of team performance, which can be:

1. Team performance: productivity, quality, innovation.
2. Member satisfaction: commitment, high morale.
3. Learning and adaptability: skills development, long-term effectiveness.

B. The process by which a series of antecedents, through mediators. Influence team outcomes is not seen as static but as evolving over time, there is a dynamism of evolution of processes and outcomes over time. From this point of view, the model includes two perspectives on how time affects teams:

a) The overall development process – which influences the overall development of the team and illustrates how teams qualitatively evolve and change and how various factors influence differently as the team matures over time.

b) The episodic process considers that teams have to execute different processes at different times, depending on the requirements of the task and which may recur in a cyclical manner.

c) Antecedents, i.e. the factors that through moderators' influence outcomes are viewed in levels (layers) of influence, the outer levels (i.e. higher-level factors) influence the inner layers (levels). According to this model, antecedents are composed of organizational context; team context, team members (characteristics of team members).
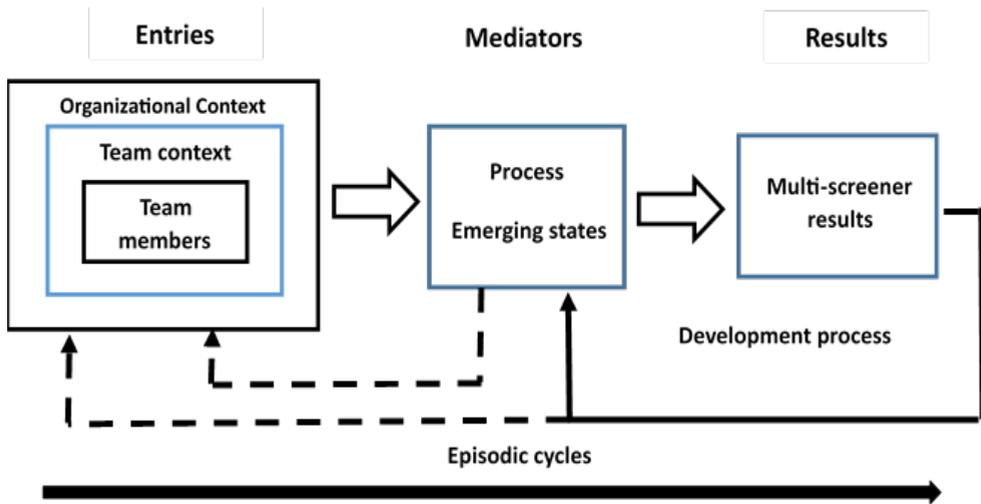
Figure 2.2. *The IMO team efficiency model*
(adapted from Matheiu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008)

According to the model, development processes unfold over time as teams mature over time. Also, episodic processes (episodic cycles) occur as a form of feedback (reverse feedback loop). It should be kept in mind that such feedback actually occurs as teams move from one stage of development to the next stage of development. Feedback given by outcomes seems to influence mediators more strongly and antecedents less. This stems from the fact that emerging team states are likely to be easily influenced by their progress over time, and teams can easily adopt different processes based on outcomes. On the other hand, the influence of team outcomes or mediators on team composition, team structure, organizational contextual factors, or other inputs is likely to be less immediate or malleable.

In some respects, the I-M-O model improves on the traditional I-P-O model because:

1. Emphasizes the role of mediators, giving a more dynamic view of team interaction.
2. Allow multiple routes to success, not just a linear relationship between inputs and outputs.
3. Recognize that not only processes influence team effectiveness, but also emergent states (e.g. collective motivation).

Example application of the I-M-O model

Suppose an IT company is developing a mobile application for a major client. The project must be completed in 6 months, and the team assigned to handle the project must collaborate effectively to meet the deadline and the client's requirements. The following elements of the I-M-O Model can be identified for this model:

1. Inputs – these are the initial resources and conditions that influence the team's performance and can be related to the following:

1.1. Individual characteristics: (1) the level of professional knowledge (professionalism) of the team members; (2) the personal level of analytical and synthesizing skills; (3) personal communication skills and ability; (4) the ability to work under pressure and the level of emotional resilience.

1.2. Team characteristics: (1) the number of members and the level of skills diversity (6 members: 3 software developers (specialized in front-end and back-end); 1 UI/UX specialist (graphical design of the application); 1 tester (checks the functionality of the application); 1 project manager (coordinates the team); (2) the level of cohesion; (3) the level of psychological safety.

1.3. Contextual factors: (1) equipment and access to technology (high-performance laptops, licensed software, access to cloud platforms; (2) the level of material and moral support from the firm's management; (3) the values of the organizational culture (promoting innovation and autonomy, equity, organizational justice).

2. **Mediators** – this is where the processes and dynamics of the team come in, transforming inputs into outputs ("how the team functions")

  2.1. Team-centered processes: (1) Daily operational meetings (15 minutes) to update progress; (2) Brainstorming sessions for efficient technical solutions; (3) Use of a task management system (JIRA) to track progress; (4) Continuous feedback between developers and UI/UX designer to optimize the application interface.

  2.2. Emerging states: (1) Team members begin to develop trust in each other as they collaborate; (2) A sense of motivation emerges due to visible progress and recognition of each other's work; (3) Communication is effective, which reduces conflict and improves collaboration.

3. **Outputs** – the results and performance of the team's work ("what are the final results") and can be:

  3.1. Team performance: (1) The application is developed according to plan and all functionalities are implemented; (2) Testing is done properly, and the final product has few bugs; (3) The client is satisfied with the result and wants future collaborations.

  3.2. Satisfaction of members: (1) The team is satisfied with the working dynamics and autonomy; (2) Collaboration has been effective, and members want to work together on other projects.

  3.3. Learning and adaptability: (1) Team members have learned new technologies and working methods; (2) They have identified areas for improvement for future projects.

On the one hand, the I-M-O model explains team efficiency: how initial resources are transformed through processes and mediators into effective outcomes.

On the other hand, through the I-M-O model, we can draw more conclusions about what determines the success of a team and how different factors influence performance, namely:

A. The importance of a well-defined team structure

The I-M-O model shows that inputs (team members, resources, organizational culture) play a key role in building an effective team. In our example: (1) The team was formed strategically, having specialists for each required role (developers, UI/UX, tester, project manager); (2) Quality technological resources allowed the

developers to perform their work unhindered. If the team had consisted of members who had no experience in similar projects or if technological resources were limited, the process would have been more difficult, and the chances of success would have decreased significantly

B. The role of processes and team dynamics in project success

Mediation between inputs and outputs is essential. In the case example, the team mechanisms facilitated effective collaboration: (1) Daily meetings and use of JIRA kept the team organized (2) Constant feedback between the developers and the UI/UX designer resulted in a better optimized final product; (3) Team trust and motivation increased as members worked well together. If these emerging processes and states were not managed properly, the team would have faced problems such as:

– Conflicts between team members due to lack of communication.
– Delays in product delivery due to poor organization.
– Low team morale, which would have affected overall performance.

So, success depends not only on who is part of the team, but also on how members interact with each other.

C. Team performance and satisfaction – how is it reflected in results?

At the end of the project, output demonstrates the impact of effective team management:

• The final product was delivered on time, according to customer requirements.
• The quality of the application was high, and tests confirmed optimal functionality.
• Team members were pleased with the collaboration, which increases the chances that they will work well together in future projects.

Had the team not had a good dynamic, this would have been reflected in:

– A buggy or non-functional app.
– A negative experience for team members, which would have led to demotivation.
– Misunderstandings and conflicts, which would have slowed progress.

D. Lessons for future projects

The I-M-O model helps us to identify what has worked well and what can be improved. In this case:

1. What went well:
   – Clarity of roles and responsibilities.
   – Efficient collaboration thanks to well-structured processes.
   – High motivation and trust among team members.
2. What can be improved in future projects:
   – There may need to be a clearer process for managing customer-requested changes.
   – Sessions could be shorter or more effective to avoid wasting time.
   – A more advanced internal feedback system could help identify problems quickly.

By implementing these improvements, the team can become even more effective in future projects.

Therefore, in conclusion, the I-M-O Model demonstrates that a high-performing team is not only determined by the competencies of its members, but also by the way they work together and are supported by the organization. A well-organized team with efficient processes and high motivation can produce excellent results. If key factors (resources, communication, motivation) are missing, team performance can suffer. Continuous learning and adaptability are essential for the long-term success of teams.

3. DELEGATION
AND TEAM COMMUNICATION

3.1. Factors influencing team success

The success or failure of a team depends, paradoxically as it may seem, on an extremely wide variety of factors and the dynamics of these factors. Among the main factors that influence the smooth running of a team's activity, i.e. the team's performance and results, we mention the following:

1. **Vision and shared sense of purpose**. The focus should be on a shared vision of the team's perspectives and objectives. Also focus should be on results, sense of priorities, clarity in decisions.

2. **Open and intense communication**. The emphasis is on open communication and mutual information.

3. **Mutual trust and respect**. Increase mutual trust. Provide honest and honest feedback. On the other hand, team members need to be encouraged and made aware of the respect they have to give each other.

4. **Democratic leadership style** (shared leadership). The emphasis should be on the following: different team members take on different leadership activities and tasks, depending on the current task and the need of the team. The formal leader has the role of supervisor and mentor of the team. Clear division of responsibilities is vital. Delegation of tasks is also strongly emphasized.

5. **Effective ways of working**. The team must know how to gather, organize and evaluate information. Team members should be encouraged to apply and use creativity and innovation as much as possible.

6. **Taking risks and hazards**. Team members should be encouraged to take various individual risks arising from team activities. On the other hand, team members must be aware that each team member must assume their individual involvement and responsibilities, risks and consequences of their involvement.

7. **Collaboration and empathy**. A successful team will place major emphasis on collaboration and mutual cooperation among all team members. Emphasize the needs of the team members.

8. **Flexibility and adaptability**. Encourage team members to be flexible in their thinking. (People see different opportunities as opportunities);

9. **Continuous learning**. It is vital for team members to continuously learn (experience, failures, individual or group learning). Emphasis should be on encouraging team members to ask uncomfortable and penetrating questions, learning from experiences and mistakes, sharing experiences and information on how to solve different problems and activities and last but not least on discussing together the causes and factors that led to failures.

10. **Conflict and time management**. Any successful team involves managing and managing conflict. Team members should be encouraged to discuss differences with logical and rational arguments and without emotional involvement. On the other hand, team members must be aware that they do not hold the absolute truth, and that solutions to conflicts do not lie in the position of intransigence but need to be discussed, analyzed and negotiated (often certain concessions have to be made to the opposing side).

3.2. Delegating tasks within a team

In general terms, delegation consists of "the temporary exercise by an employee, by order of the employer, of work or tasks corresponding to other work, executive or managerial duties, at work or outside the workplace".

From a managerial point of view, delegation means "sharing projects, activities and tasks with members of your team by giving them the opportunity to complete these tasks, activities and projects efficiently with a minimum of intervention".

Task delegation is an effective method of both leading and motivating team members. In this respect, task delegation has 2 benefits:

1. **It reduces and relieves a leader** of certain tasks that can be performed by subordinates anyway without his or her intervention. In this situation, the leader is left to perform only the important managerial functions that are beyond the competence of the subordinates (e.g. strategic forecasting and

planning). In this way, it is possible for the leader to focus only on the strategic issues of the organization (team);

2. **It boosts the morale and "self" confidence and "self-esteem" of subordinates** to whom tasks are delegated. People are often intrinsically motivated by the pleasure of taking on certain tasks and responsibilities.

One important thing to emphasize is that delegation does not mean giving your subordinates the heavy tasks that you as a boss do not want to do or transferring your routine activities that bore you, in these cases the likelihood of demotivation is extremely high.

Delegation, on the other hand, can be seen as the process of giving employees at all hierarchical levels (whether in executive or managerial positions) both the authority to make decisions and the responsibility for the results obtained. Delegation can also be represented as a function or relationship between the following variables (factors):

Delegation = Responsibility + Authority + Accountability for results

We draw your attention, however, to the fact that there are also certain risks arising from the delegation of responsibilities and tasks, namely:

1. Loss of authority. Many managers or bosses may eventually lose their formal and informal authority over subordinates – the subordinate undermining formal authority.

2. Loss of control. As a form of loss of control over the activities carried out by subordinates, as well as over the achievements.

Delegation, from a psychological point of view, means for the delegator:

1. to trust someone (employee) to entrust him/her with a task that he/she can accomplish.

2. have the courage and assume the risks of possible failure in case the delegated person does not carry out the tasks entrusted to him/her.

At the same time, **delegation** for the one being delegated means:

1. demonstrate that he/she has the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to solve the task.

2. that you are willing and motivated to complete the task – you are determined to take the risks and failures that come with taking on tasks.

Stages of task delegation:

1. Define tasks by dividing the work into smaller parts. Smaller parts are easier to delegate.
2. Set goals for each task – choose the best person for each task. "Best fit" does not necessarily mean that the person must already have all the necessary skills but must be able to learn and apply them in a timely manner.
3. Plan the task – together with your chosen person, make sure he fully understands and accepts the task; provide all the information he needs.
4. Make sure you are not only delegating responsibility but also the authority he needs to carry out the task.
5. Agree on how to work and report the results of the task and what the consequences will be.
6. Regular evaluation and checking of how well the task is accomplished. Giving constructive feedback (both ways), rewarding and appreciating the results achieved.

At the same time, a number of authors (Robbins & Coulter, 2017) detail the delegation process as a key element of effective management, emphasizing that its success depends on following clear steps and precise communication:

1. Assigning Tasks

1.1. Task definition: the manager identifies the activities that can be transferred, considering the complexity, time required and the subordinate's competencies.

1.2. Selection criteria:

- Tasks that are repetitive, specialized or contribute to the employee's development are a priority.
- Tasks with major strategic impact (e.g. top decisions) are usually left to the manager.

2. Granting Authority

2.1. Delegation of decision-making power: The subordinate is given the right to use resources (e.g. time, money, equipment) and to make decisions necessary to accomplish the task.

2.2. Levels of authority:

- Limited authority (e.g. only to collect data).
- Significant authority (e.g. to allocate budget for an activity).

2.3. Risks: Insufficient authority leads to bottlenecks, and too much autonomy can lead to deviations from objectives.

3. Creating Responsibility

3.1. Double responsibility:

- The subordinate is obliged to complete the task as required.
- The manager remains accountable to his or her superiors for the final result (the concept of "unaccountability").

3.2. Implications:

- Managers should avoid micro-managing but provide support when needed.
- Subordinates must understand that they can be held accountable for failures.

4. Accountability

4.1. Evaluation of results: both parties must justify the results:

- The subordinate reports progress and encounters.
- The manager evaluates performance and provides feedback.

4.2. Tools:

- Regular monitoring (e.g. progress reports).
- Rewards/sanctions system to encourage accountability.

On the other hand, a team delegation process requires:

1. Mutual trust between manager and subordinate.
2. Balance between control and autonomy.
3. Anticipating problems (e.g. refusal to accept the task, fear of failure).

The delegation of tasks in a work team is influenced by several factors, including:

1. **Skills and competencies of team members:** It is essential for the leader to know the skills of each member and assign tasks accordingly to ensure efficiency and quality of work.
2. **Trust between team members:** A team where members trust each other is more likely to collaborate effectively. Trust facilitates delegation because the leader feels comfortable leaving tasks to others.
3. **Clarity of objectives:** If the team has well-defined objectives, delegation becomes easier as each member understands their contribution to the common goal.

4. **Organizational structure**: Hierarchy and communication within the organization can influence how tasks are delegated. In a flatter organization, for example, there may be more flexibility in delegating tasks.

5. **Organizational culture:** A culture that encourages accountability and innovation can stimulate delegation. If the team feels supported to make decisions, leaders are more likely to delegate tasks.

6. **Type of tasks:** Complex or critical tasks are often handled carefully, which can make leaders reluctant to delegate them. On the other hand, simpler tasks can be more easily delegated.

7. **Feedback and appraisal:** A well-defined system of feedback and appraisal can encourage delegation, as team members know that they will receive support and improvements if needed.

8. **Motivation and commitment:** Team members who are motivated and committed are more likely to accept delegated tasks and perform them effectively.

9. **Available resources:** Access to resources and tools can influence the team's ability to manage delegated tasks.

These aspects may vary from one team to another, but it is important to assess them in the specific context of each team in order to optimize the delegation process.

Example on the impact of different factors influencing the delegation of tasks in a team

Take the case of a project team that aims to develop an innovative software application. The team consists of a project manager, senior developers, junior developers, a UI/UX designer and a testing specialist. The objective is to launch the application within six months. The impact of the factors influencing task delegation can be seen in the following steps:

1. *Skills and competencies of team members:* The project manager, knowing the skills of each team member, decides to delegate tasks according to their specializations. For example, senior developers are given responsibility for the application of architecture, while junior developers are in charge of developing core functionality.

2. *Trust between team members:* The manager has a trusting relationship with the team, knowing that each member will complete tasks efficiently

and on time. This trust leads him to delegate important tasks, such as leading brainstorming meetings, to a senior developer.

3. *Clarity of objectives:* The project has a detailed plan with clear objectives set from the outset. This helps team members understand what needs to be accomplished, making it easier to delegate specific tasks for each stage of development.

4. *Organizational structure*: In a flat organizational structure, the manager can collaborate directly with all team members, which allows for greater flexibility in delegation, eliminating the requirement for task approval by different hierarchical levels.

5. *Organizational culture:* The organization promotes a culture of innovation and ownership by encouraging team members to propose ideas and take the initiative in managing tasks. This empowers members to take on more complex tasks.

6. *Type of tasks:* Technical tasks, such as writing code for advanced functionality, are delegated differently. The manager ensures that senior developers take on these tasks, confident that they can handle the challenges.

7. *Feedback and evaluation:* The manager implements weekly feedback meetings where progress and challenges are discussed. These meetings allow for quick adjustments and corrective task delegation necessary to keep the team on track.

8. *Motivation and commitment:* The team is motivated by the prospect of successfully completing the project and the recognition they can gain at the end. This motivation enables them to take on difficult tasks and actively contribute to the success of the project.

9. *Resources available:* The team has access to modern software development tools that facilitate collaboration. These resources allow efficient delegation of tasks between members, who can work simultaneously on different aspects of the application.

In this example, the impact of factors on task delegation is evident. A well-structured team, with motivated members and complementary skills, works efficiently on application development. Proper task delegation leads to a fast and quality project completion, demonstrating the importance of these factors in the context of teamwork.

3.3. Team communication

When communicating with team members, we can notice and realize that each team member has a different personality and mindset from the rest, which makes communication more difficult and less effective. Success in teamwork can only be achieved through effective communication.

On the other hand, successful teamwork does not come alone, but with communication. If this is not done properly, then conflicts can arise. We need to be realistic and pragmatic enough and have a strong character to know what or when to give in when we have to, to know what and how to speak up when we need to, and to persevere when the situation demands it. For example: many times, in a team each team member supports his own ideas, then the leader together with the team will have to choose the best ideas. If our own ideas have not been chosen or accepted, we have to respect the decision made and this motivates us to become better at what we do. Therefore, it is extremely important to communicate correctly with the team and obviously success will not be late in the team.

Communication is an active process of transmitting and receiving information, in which at least one of the communicating partners must have the skills of active listening, understanding the message and responding appropriately, interpreting non-verbal language and motivating the interlocutor to sustain the conversation.

From a theoretical point of view, the role of team communication can be summarized as follows (Raboca M. , 2020):
– Make a decisive contribution to goal setting.
– Help develop plans and strategies to achieve objectives.
– Contributes or is instrumental in organizing human resources to achieve objectives.
– It is instrumental in creating a climate in which people can be led, directed and motivated.
– It is of major and decisive help in defusing conflict and/or implementing change.

Communication is now considered to be a much more complex process than the traditional **sender-message-receiver** model. In some respects, it is recognized that effective communication is about more than polite conversation. In this sense, it is important to have good communication skills, i.e. to know **'WHAT'** and **'HOW'** to communicate.

From the point of view of the characteristics that communication has in a team, the following can be stated (Raboca H. , 2015) :

1. Communication is one of the basic needs of team members – the need to communicate, to understand and to feel understood.
2. Communication skills of team members that can be learned and improved.
3. In effective team communication you first need to be sure that you understand and only then make sure that you have been understood.
4. Team communication is the process that unites team members to achieve common goals.
5. There are a number of problems that can occur in the communication process in a team: initiating, transmitting and receiving information.
6. Communication helps team members engage in teamwork, increases motivation and leads to high work performance.
7. Team leaders <u>need to communicate at different levels</u>: team members (individually), with the team, with departments and with people outside the company.

On the other hand, it is interesting to discuss and analyze the concept of "communication climate" for a team. Conceptually**, communication climate** is the atmosphere or conditions in which information, ideas and feelings are exchanged. It is obvious that 2 types of communication climate can be identified for the team, i.e. open communication climate and closed communication climate (Table 3.1).

The main characteristics of an open climate of communication are:
1. Provide information and do not evaluate the work of colleagues.
2. Even when criticism is expressed, it is meant to help and improve performance or relationships, not to offend, blame or put the other person in a negative light.
3. The focus is on finding solutions to problems and not on what cannot be done.
4. There is a strong emphasis on empathy and understanding team members.
5. All team members participate in the communication process equally, regardless of role or status.
6. Unavoidable errors and incorrect conclusions are accepted – within certain limits.
7. Team members give each other constant feedback to maintain good working relationships and to perform at their best.

Table 3.1. Open vs. closed communication climate

Open communication climate	Closed communication climate
In an open or cooperative environment people perceive more importance and value in their role, feeling they can express their ideas honestly without fear of reprisal.	Where the communication climate is closed, so-called "hidden agendas" emerge, i.e. the hidden interests of some team members that are pursued relentlessly – to win approvals, promotions or resources.
Such an environment stimulates team members to better understand what each of them needs to do to achieve the common goal together.	In such an "information is power" environment, people often become possessive or exclusive about the information they have access to. Control is maintained by suppressing open forms of communication because information is offered or withheld in order to strengthen the position of the possessor rather than to contribute to the effectiveness of communication.

Source**:** (Raboca, 2013, p. 45)

The main characteristics of a closed communication climate are:

1. When things don't go well, there is a tendency to incriminate (blame others); feedback is usually negative and people often end up feeling incompetent, inferior or inadequate.
2. People are explicitly expected to behave in a certain way, inhibiting or changing traits that don't conform to the imposed norms.
3. The messages usually have hidden meanings; they are expressed insincerely or with the aim of manipulating them.
4. Communication is usually detached and impersonal, with little concern for others.
5. In relationships with others, some individuals tend to emphasize differences in status, skills or knowledge.
6. Differing points of view or collaborative solutions are not readily accepted.
7. Little importance is given to the needs of teammates.

It is not without interest to recall the main factors that can generate communication problems in a team. Thus, the main factors that generate communication problems in a team are:

1. **Lack of clarity:** Vague or ambiguous instructions can lead to confusion. Without clear communication of goals and expectations, team members may misinterpret tasks.

2. **Cultural differences:** teams made up of members from different cultural backgrounds may experience communication problems due to different perceptions, varying communication styles and distinct social norms.

3. **Poor communication skills**: Some team members may have limited speaking or listening skills, which can lead to misunderstandings or missing essential information.

4. **Lack of feedback:** Without an effective feedback system, team members don't know if their messages have been understood correctly, which can create confusion and frustration.

5. **Poor technological connections:** Inefficient use of communication technology or technical problems can impede the flow of information and create delays in responses.

6. **Stress and time pressure:** During periods of stress or high intensity, team members may communicate less or omit important details, leading to misunderstandings.

7. **Rigid hierarchies:** A strict hierarchical structure can restrict the flow of information and discourage team members from communicating freely or sharing ideas.

8. **Interpersonal conflicts:** Personal disputes or misunderstandings can create an atmosphere of tension, affecting openness and honesty in communication.

9. **Inappropriate tasks:** If tasks are distributed unevenly or if some members are overloaded, information may not be shared correctly, which affects cooperation.

10. **Lack of an established communication channel:** Without well-defined communication channels (e.g. regular meetings, online discussion groups), team members may have difficulty connecting and expressing their thoughts or concerns.

By identifying these factors, teams can take proactive steps to improve communication and prevent problems that could affect performance and collaboration.

Last but not least, it is important to remember what effective communication in a team actually involves. The answer to this question is not at all easy, due to the very complexity of how to define the concept of communication, i.e. the complexity of the communication process. In relation to the concept of effective communication, we believe that this term, from certain points of view, implies **"to correctly convey a message that the interlocutor understands as we want**

him or her to understand it". Of course, we would again point out that communication is not about talking but about transmitting useful information. There is no recipe for effective communication in a team. At most we can identify certain prescriptions that can lead to more effective communication. In this respect, we believe that the following aspects should be considered in order to improve communication, i.e. to make it more effective:

1. **Pause before answering –** it gives you time to understand what the interlocutor wanted to convey and to formulate your ideas or personal point of view.

2. **Listen to the end of what the interlocutor has to say –** Listening is not the same as hearing. It is important for us to listen in order to find out, to understand and to create a connection between the participants in the discussion.

3. **Adapt according to the interlocutor –** It is important to convey information in a way that makes sense to the listener. Be open and unprejudiced. Use language they understand. When you are not understood, look for other ways to say what you have already said. Make sure the listener also **understood what you were trying to say**. If not, start again with a smile on your face, because repeating what you have just said will only deepen what you meant.

4. **Feel and empathize –** Communicating is not just talking!!!!! To communicate is to transmit. When you want to convey information, you are unintentionally conveying a series of feelings, moods, attitudes. So do others. You will often find out much more than your interlocutor is telling you by paying attention:
   – his posture – it will give you information about his attitude towards you, i.e. how he feels or how he "positions" himself in relation to you.
   – his gestures – will give you information about what he thinks about the subject, how he feels about you.
   – at his breath.
   – his facial expressions (facial expressions) and the look in his eyes.

5. **Learn to understand by listening**. You have to learn to really listen. Usually, we don't try to understand what we hear, but rather we try to find a way to get straight to our opinion.

6. **Observe the outcome of what you have communicated**. Most of the time, we think that what we have communicated is exactly what we meant, but it is not always what we think.

If you are communicating with a team member, make sure that the listener has also understood what you wanted to say or communicate.

Example of factors that create communication problems in a team and solutions to solve the problems

In a project team, some members work from the office and others work from home (remote). The team uses multiple communication channels (e-mail, Microsoft Teams) without a clear strategy, which leads to confusion and loss of important information. Also, some team members do not express their opinions clearly or do not listen to others, leading to misunderstandings and uninformed decisions.

A. Factors that create problems:

1. *Lack of a clear and consistent communication channel* – Information gets lost between multiple platforms.
2. *Cultural or personality barriers* – Some members are more reserved and do not express their ideas, while others dominate conversations.
3. *Differences in working styles* – Those who work remotely feel left out of decisions, and those in the office don't consider the availability of remote colleagues.
4. *Lack of clear feedback* – Team members do not provide enough constructive feedback, which leads to mistakes being repeated.

B. Solutions to improve communication:

1. *Establish a main communication channel:* (1) Choose a single platform (e.g. Microsoft Teams) for day-to-day communication and make sure all team members are familiar with it; (2) Create separate channels for specific projects or topics to better organize discussions.
2. *Promote an open and inclusive culture:* (1) Encourage all team members to express their views, making sure that each person has a chance to speak during meetings; (2) Use techniques such as "round-robin" (each person expresses their views in turn) to avoid dominance of discussions by a few individuals.
3. *Organize regular and effective meetings:* (1) Hold short, structured meetings with a clear agenda to ensure that everyone is on the same wavelength; (2) Include one-on-one meetings to discuss individual problems or concerns.

4. ***Implement a system of constructive feedback:*** (1) Encourage regular and specific feedback, both positive and constructive, to improve team performance; (2) Use methods such as "Start, Stop, Continue" to provide clear and actionable feedback.

5. ***Recognizing cultural and personality differences:*** (1) Organize team building activities to support mutual understanding and overcome cultural or personality barriers; (2) Use an adaptable communication style, considering the preferences of each team member.

6. **Use effective collaboration tools:** deploy project management tools (such as Trello, Asana or Jira) to track tasks and progress, making sure everyone has access to the same information.

Therefore, in conclusion, communication problems in a team can be solved through structured approaches and by promoting an open and inclusive culture. Establishing clear processes, using appropriate tools and encouraging regular feedback are key to improving collaboration and team results.

4. TEAM EXPLANATORY MODEL

4.1. Explanatory aspects of the model

Team effectiveness and teamwork are influenced by a number of structural and process factors, which are illustrated in the figure below (Fig. 4.1). In fact, the figure below is an explanatory model of how different factors influence internal processes within the team, i.e. team effectiveness.
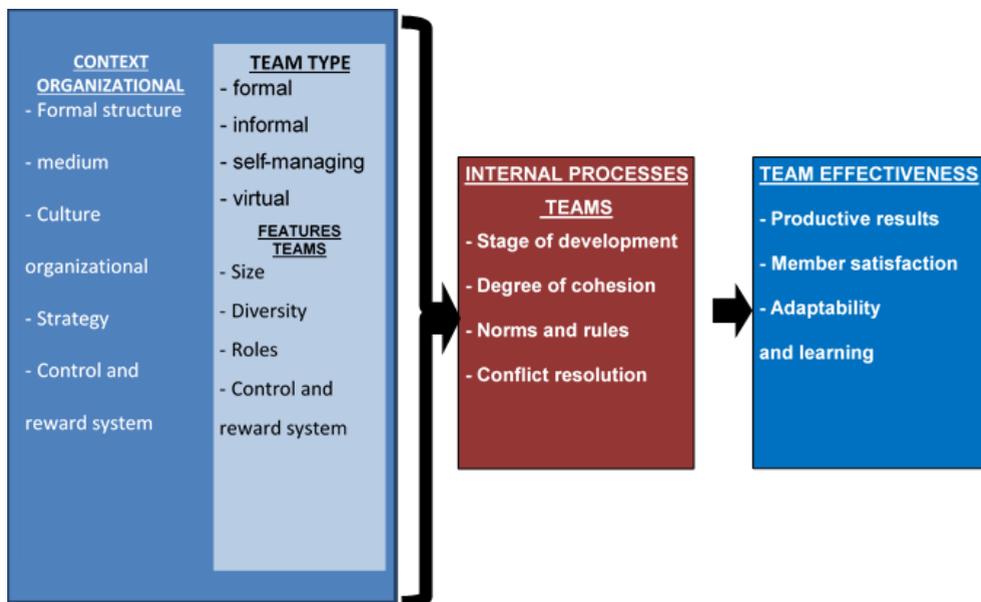
Figure 4.1. *Aspects that influence and are influenced by internal team processes*
(Adapted: (Draft & Marcic, 2009, p. 591)

In general, the efficiency of teamwork (team effectiveness) is highlighted by the following aspects:

(1) **Productive team results –** these refer to the quality and quantity of the output and outcomes of the work carried out by the team, in line with the level of achievement of objectives.

(2) Team member satisfaction – refers to the ability of the team to satisfy to a high degree (achieving a high level) the individual (personal) needs and requirements of the group members. The satisfaction of team members has a major influence on the team as a whole, as a high level of satisfaction ensures that individuals maintain their team membership and thus ensure a high level of commitment.

(3) Adaptability and learning capacity – refers to the ability of the team (team members) to assimilate new knowledge, new skills, and new abilities needed to perform the tasks and activities they have to accomplish. This capacity is important for the team because the way the team assimilates and learns helps the team to adapt, take advantage of, or defend itself against new threats or opportunities offered by the external environment.

On the other hand, as the concept of effectiveness is quite complex and multidimensional, for the team, team effectiveness can be analyzed through the perspective of more than 3 dimensions, namely:

1. **Performance:** measuring the results achieved by the team against the objectives set.
2. **Collaboration:** the degree to which team members work together and coordinate their efforts.
3. **Innovation**: the team's ability to generate and implement new ideas or solutions.
4. **Member satisfaction:** the level of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment of team members with the work done.
5. **Adaptability:** the team's ability to adapt to changes in the environment and respond to challenges.
6. **Cohesiveness:** the degree of unity and solidarity between team members.
7. **Decision Quality**: the efficiency of decision making within the team.

One set of factors that influence team effectiveness relates to the organizational context, i.e. the formal structure of the organization, external environmental factors, the type and strength of the existing organizational culture, and the control and reward systems implemented in the organization.

Another set of factors influencing team effectiveness are those related to team characteristics imposed by the manager. These characteristics include team

type, team structure, team composition. Basically, the manager decides when the team is created, how long it will exist, what type and structural form the team will have, and who its members will, what type and structural form the team will have, and who will be the team members.

In fact, the characteristics of the team, imposed by the manager, influence the internal processes in the team, processes which in turn will influence the results and satisfaction of the team members as well as the level of contribution to the organization's adaptability to the environment.

Thus, a good team manager (team leader) will be concerned and will contribute, at all times, to the development of the team, to increasing team cohesion, to defusing conflicts, in order to build an effective team.

Also, according to some experts (Lau & Murnigham, 1998) (Dora Lau and Murnigham,1998), team diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity of members, as well as their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, has a highly significant impact on the effectiveness and processes within the team.

The efficiency of a team's work is influenced by a number of factors, which can be classified into several categories. Here is a detailed overview of these factors:

1. **Communication**
   1.1. *Clarity*: Information should be conveyed clearly and concisely.
   1.2. *Openness:* team members should feel comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas.
   1.3. *Feedback:* Giving and receiving constructive feedback is essential for process improvement.

2. **Roles and responsibilities (team members)**
   2.1. *How to define roles:* Each team member should have a well-defined role to avoid confusion.
   2.2. *Level of responsibility:* team members must take responsibility for their tasks and results.

3. **Knowledge and skills**
   3.1. *Individual professional expertise:* The specific skills and knowledge of each member can affect team performance.
   3.2. *Level of continuous learning:* A team that promotes professional development will have a greater capacity to innovate and adapt.

4. **Team cohesion**

   4.1. ***Interpersonal relationships and bonds:*** A cohesive team with positive relationships between its members will collaborate more effectively.

   4.2. ***Level of trust:*** Mutual trust supports open communication and collaboration.

5. **Motivation and commitment**

   5.1. ***Degree of (intrinsic) motivation:*** Team members should be motivated by their personal interests and goals.

   5.2. ***Level of commitment (dedication) to goals:*** Strong commitment to team goals increases efficiency and determination.

6. **Time management**

   6.1. ***Degree of planning (organization of tasks):*** Good planning and organization of time helps to meet deadlines.

   6.2. ***Prioritize tasks:*** identify the critical tasks on which the team should focus.

7. **Leadership**

   7.1. ***Leadership style***: effective leadership influences how the team works together and how conflicts are managed.

   7.2. ***Leader support:*** A leader who supports and guides the team can improve team performance.

8. **Organizational culture**

   8.1. ***Values and norms promoted by organizational culture***: Organizational culture influences how team members interact and collaborate.

   8.2. ***Organizational support:*** The resources and support provided by the organization are essential for the effectiveness of the team.

9. **Available resources**

   9.1. ***Resources and access to technology:*** Access to appropriate tools and technology can facilitate communication and collaboration.

   9.2. ***Financial and material resources***: Availability of resources needed to accomplish the tasks.

10. Level of conflicts

10.1. Level of good working climate: Friendly and tension-free atmosphere among team members

10.2. Conflict management mechanisms: An effective team has clear strategies to address and resolve conflicts.

These factors interact and influence each other, and a team that optimizes these aspects can significantly improve the efficiency of its work.

4.2. Typology of teams

In general, there are several types of teams in organizations. The most common ways of classifying a team is either in structural terms (creation or structure as part of the formal structure of the organization) or in terms of effectiveness (creation or informal structure to increase productivity, performance and people's participation (commitment) in certain activities).

The most common team forms are:

A. *Informal teams* **–** are teams that have no well-defined formal structure within the organization. In fact, team members form themselves into a team to solve certain problems without the existence of formal membership (a status enshrined in rules and procedures) or a formal structure. In general, informal teams rely heavily on a high level of professionalism (of the members), lending themselves to less formal or formally standardized activities (e.g.: team operating patients in hospitals, team making different cinema films, etc.).

B. *Formal teams* **–** created by organizations as part of the formal organizational structure. This class is found in 2 forms (forms that represent the vertical and horizontal structural relationships within an organization), namely:

1) Vertical teams – made up of managers and/or their subordinates on the same hierarchical line of command. This type of team is also called a functional team and may include three or four hierarchical levels. Often, a vertical team has only one location in the organization and belongs to one department. For example, in a hospital, the nurses have a dedicated space and belong to one department.

2) Horizontal teams – are composed of employees at the same hierarchical level but coming from different specialized fields. A horizontal team consists

of people from different divisions or departments whose activities involve diverse and specific actions across many fields (Owens, 1989). Often, once the objectives are achieved, the team is disbanded, with each team member returning to their original department.
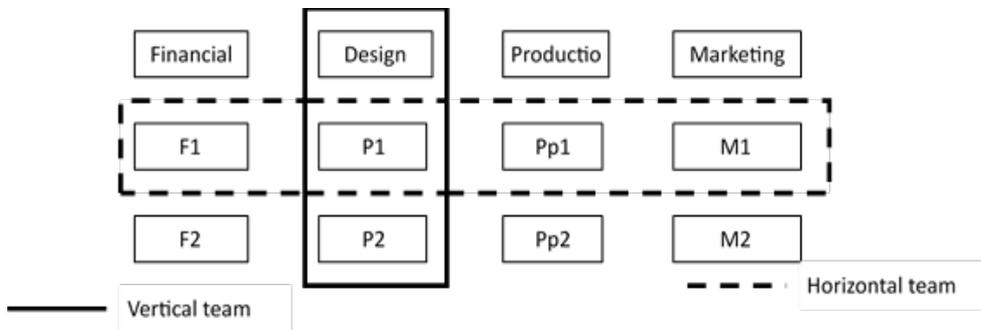
Figure 4.2. *Vertical and horizontal teams in an organization*

The most common forms of horizontal teams are:

a) **Interdepartmental (cross-functional) teams –** made up of people from different departments whose mission is to accomplish specific objectives requiring specific activities. The interdepartmental team exists until objectives are achieved or accomplished. For example: an interdepartmental team is used to create a new product, develop the quality of services offered by universities.

b) **Committees (Commissions)** are teams that have a longer life than interdepartmental teams, and may exist, in some cases, as permanent parts of the formal organizational structure. In general, committees are made up of official representatives of the organization, appointed more formally (by the governing body or person) and less on their professional performance (Lason & LaFasto, 1989) . The purpose of committees is to solve problems or accomplish urgent objectives that arise regularly. For example: staff hiring committee or committee, student evaluation committee for the award of bachelor's or master's degrees, student enrollment and admissions committee.

c) **Special purpose teams (project teams)** – set up similarly to interdepartmental teams but aimed at solving urgent or special problems that

require a new approaches and involve predominantly creative and innovative activities. These teams, often called project teams, are less formalized than interdepartmental teams, with their structure and work governed by fewer rules, norms, or procedures.

As part of the horizontal organizational structure, horizontal teams offer the following advantages:
– allow members of the organization to better exchange information.
– achieving certain objectives is extremely efficient and effective.
– developing the process of creativity and coming up with new ideas and solutions to organizational problems.
– develop employees' performance (employees' professionalism is better emphasized).

d) **Self-managed (self-directed) teams** – these teams manage, administer, and lead themselves by virtue of autonomy granted to the team members by the organization's managers. There is typically no external manager; team members often rotate leadership duties, or managerial roles are not well defined, with decisions taken collectively. The basic purpose is to increase employee involvement through structures encouraging participation in decision-making, making team members accountable for actions and decisions without outside intervention. Responsibilities include making decisions on hiring, firing, task assignments, resource distribution, and enforcing rules. This concept originated from realizing that giving employees a high degree of decision-making autonomy leads to higher efficiency and productivity (Shonk, 1992). Studies highlight the fact that self-driven teams promote employees' sense of importance and identification with the organization in the hearts and minds of employees (Wilson, Wellings, Byham, & Jill, 1994). This category also includes problem-solving teams composed of volunteers dedicated to addressing organizational problems, meeting voluntarily without formal leadership to improve quality and efficiency.

Another classification scheme of team types can be the one below, which considers several criteria, such as purpose, duration, structure and mode of interaction. Here are some common categories of teams (Draft & Marcic, 2009) :

1. Functional (departmental) teams

Description: These teams are made up of members from the same department or organizational function (e.g. marketing, finance, human resources).

Characteristics of team: Members have similar skills and responsibilities, and the leader is usually the department manager.

Example: Accounting team in a company.

2. Cross-functional teams

Description: Made up of members from different departments or functional areas working together to achieve a common goal.

Characteristics of team: Diversity in skills and perspectives, which can lead to innovative solutions.

Example: New product launch team, including representatives from marketing, production and R&D.

3. Project teams

Description: Created to accomplish a specific project with a defined beginning and end.

Characteristics of team: Members are often chosen according to the skills needed for the project.

Example: The team responsible for building a new company headquarters.

4. Virtual (remote) teams

Description: Team members work together but are geographically dispersed and use technology to communicate.

Characteristics of team: Flexible working but requires effective communication and online collaboration tools.

Example: Software development team with members from different countries.

5. Self-managing (autonomous) teams

Description: Teams that manage their own activities and decisions without a designated leader.

Characteristics of team: Members share leadership and decision-making responsibilities.

Example: Agile teams in software development.

6. Urgent problem-solving teams (also called task force intervention teams)

Description: Formed to address a specific problem or opportunity, usually over a short period of time.

Characteristics of team: Focus on solving the problem quickly, then the team falls apart.

Example: Team set up to manage a public relations crisis.

7. Innovation (creativity) teams

Description: specialized in generating new ideas, creative solutions or innovations.

Characteristics of team: An open and collaborative environment that encourages brainstorming and experimentation.

Example: R&D team in a technology company.

8. Operational (production) teams

Description: Responsible for the day-to-day activities and basic operations of an organization.

Characteristics of team: Focus on efficiency and repetitive tasks.

Example: Production team in a factory.

9. Leadership teams

Description: Made up of managers and leaders who set the strategic direction of the organization.

Characteristics of team: High-level decisions and responsibility for the overall performance of the organization.

Example: the executive board of a corporation.

10. Support teams (support)

Description: Provides assistance and resources to other teams or departments.

Characteristics of team: Focus on facilitating the activities of others and ensuring that the necessary resources are available.

Example: IT team providing technical support to the entire organization.

11. High performance teams

Description: Teams that exceed expectations and achieve exceptional results.

Characteristics of team: Members are highly motivated, talented and collaborative.

Example: Sales team consistently exceeding targets.

12. Temporary (ad-hoc) teams

Description: Teams are short-term groups formed to address a specific task or problem, disbanding once the objective is achieved

Characteristics of team: Flexibility and adaptability but may lack formal structures.

Example: the organizing team of a corporate event.

Each type of team has its advantages and challenges, and choosing the right type depends on the goals of the organization and the nature of the task at hand.

4.3. Team characteristics

One of the concerns of the manager, with regard to the team, is to design the team in such a way that it achieves maximum efficiency and productivity. In other words, the manager's role is to establish, for the team, those characteristics (organizational dimensions) that ensure maximum dynamism, productivity and efficiency.

Analyzing and interpreting the characteristics of a team can be approached through several dimensions, which provide a comprehensive understanding of its dynamics, processes, performance and effectiveness. These dimensions are essential to identify the team's strengths and weaknesses and to understand the internal processes and related activities and implement improvement strategies. Here are some key dimensions:

1. Structural size of the team

Team size: number of members and its impact on communication and coordination.

Roles and responsibilities: clarity and distribution of roles in the team.

Reporting hierarchy and structure: how the team is organized (linear, matrix, flat, etc.).

Resources available: Material, financial and human resources available to the team.

2. Process dimension

Communication: Quality, frequency and effectiveness of communication between team members.

Decision making: How decisions are taken (consensus, delegation, autocracy, etc.).

Conflict resolution: the team's ability to manage and resolve conflicts.

Coordination and collaboration: the degree of synchronization and cooperation between members.

3. The relational dimension

Interpersonal relationships: the quality of relationships between team members (trust, respect, mutual support).

Diversity: The variety of perspectives, experiences and team skills.

Cohesion: the degree of unity and team spirit.

Leadership: the leadership style and influence of the leader on the group.

4. Performance dimension (level of results)

Objectives and results: Clarity of objectives and the degree to which they are achieved.

Efficiency and productivity: how resources are managed to get results.

Quality of results: The level of excellence of the team's results.

Adaptability: The team's ability to adapt to changes and challenges.

5. Cultural dimension

Values and norms: common values and norms of team behavior.

Organizational climate: general atmosphere and team morale.

Team identity: Sense of belonging and pride in the team.

Innovation and creativity: The degree to which the team encourages new ideas and creative approaches.

6. Development dimension

Learning and growth: opportunities for members' professional and personal development.

Feedback and evaluation: the frequency and quality of feedback provided within the team.

Continuous change and improvement: The team's ability to evolve and improve over time.

7. Motivational dimension

Member motivation: Level of commitment and enthusiasm of team members.

Recognition and rewards: How individual and collective contributions are recognized and rewarded.

Job satisfaction: the degree to which members are satisfied with their work roles and work environment.

8. Strategic dimension

Alignment with organizational goals: How the team's goals align with those of the organization.

Vision and direction: Clarity of vision and long-term direction.

Competitiveness and positioning: How the team compares with other teams or competitors.

9. Technological dimension

Use of technology: How tools and technologies are used to support team activities.

Virtual collaboration: Efficiency in using remote working platforms.

Technological innovation: The degree to which the team adopts and benefits from new technologies.

10. Ethical dimension

Compliance and Integrity: Compliance with ethical standards and organizational rules.

Social responsibility: team involvement in activities that benefit the community or the environment.

Transparency: The degree of openness and honesty in communication and decision-making.

All these dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing and interpreting team characteristics. They can be used to identify strengths, address weaknesses and develop strategies to improve team performance and cohesion.

On the other hand, a broad scheme to highlight the aspects that can characterize a team is the scheme based on 3 dimensions, namely: (1) team size; (2) diversity; (3) roles of team members.

1. ***Team size –*** these characteristics influence team productivity and performance. Some experts have pointed out that the most productive and effective team consists of 4-6 members (Draft & Marcic, 2009) . They also noted that including more than 6 people in a team causes a decrease in team members' motivation, increased coordination problems, and decreased productivity and performance. The issue a

team size may seem straightforward. On the one hand, the team needs to be large enough to incorporate the different skills and competencies required to achieve objectives, allowing members to express their opinions on problem-solving. On the other hand, the team needs to be small enough to allow its members to feel an intimate part of the team and to enable efficient and effective communication. Generally, any increase in team size leads to greater difficulties in communication, interaction, and influence among members. Thus, the following should be kept in mind regarding team size:

a. **Small teams** (2-6 members) have a high degree of harmony and understanding, and the exchange of opinions and views between team members is extremely high. Small teams are also much more effective problem solvers, while their members have a high degree of satisfaction.

b. **Large teams** (more than 10 members) tend to have large differences of opinion and tend to be structured in subgroups that frequently come into conflict. Communication and coordination in these teams become extremely flawed and difficult. Last but not least, the level of satisfaction and morale among members of these teams tends to be low. Due to difficult communication, low satisfaction, team productivity and effectiveness tends to be low.

c. **As the size of the team increases, so does the number of 'filler' members**. The term 'filler members' refers to those members of a team who enjoy the benefits of membership but do not participate and contribute nothing to the work of the team. One of the classic examples relates to students working together on a seminar assignment or project. In this case there are students who do not participate in the work of the team but are entitled to all the rights of all team members.

2. *Diversity* – is another characteristic that influences team productivity and performance. Because teams require and demand a wide variety of skills, knowledge and experience in order to achieve their objectives, heterogeneous teams are more effective and perform better than homogeneous teams. In general, specialized studies convey the idea that the more diverse (heterogeneous) the composition of teams, the more innovative problem-solving solutions they produce. In this sense, diversity in functional areas of activity, i.e. diversity in skills, abilities, knowledge and ways of thinking, are often sources of creativity, with creativity being a

positive influence on finding innovative solutions to problems. Racial and ethnic diversity can also be a positive thing for the team, although in the short term these diversities lead to a decrease in efficiency and performance (due to difficulties in communication, culture, working style).

3. ***Roles of team members*** – for the team to be successful in the long term, it must be structured in such a way that it satisfies 2 requirements (Hare, 1994) :

    a. **maintains a consistently high level of satisfaction and satisfaction among team members.**

    b. **the objectives are achieved in an efficient and effective way (the team has a consistently high level of performance).**

Satisfying these 2 requirements, in terms of success, requires the emergence of 2 roles in the team, namely:

I. Specialist role (different areas and tasks)

Team members who take on and play the role of specialists spend their time and energy to help the team achieve its goals. The team specialist role is characterized by the following:

– Initiate ideas – propose new solutions to solve the problem.

– They express their opinions and suggestions, often pertinent, on different aspects of the team's work.

– They inform themselves and in turn inform the rest of the team – seek information on how to solve problems.

– They work energetically and involve other members in their activities.

II. Socio-emotional role

This role is intended to support (maintain and develop) the emotional and social needs and requirements of team members. This role has a high significance in increasing or strengthening the social entity of the team. Social-emotional roles are characterized by the following:

– Encouraging – although they don't come up with new ideas on how to solve the problem, they encourage the team to come up with innovative ideas by assimilating these ideas extremely quickly.

– Harmonize – try to be balanced and impartial and to reconcile different conflicts between team members (often this role is the bridge between different team members).

– It reduces tensions and promotes compromise.

– Ensures a relaxed working environment (ensures good team spirit).

Depending on how predominant one role or the other (one of the 2 roles) is, teams can be divided into:

1. ***socially oriented teams*** – most team members assume social-emotional roles. Thus, in these teams' members do not criticize and disagree with each other, the volume and intensity of conflicts is low. However, these teams are unproductive in the sense that the main concern of the team is not the achievement of goals, but rather the maintenance of a high level of calm and happiness among team members. Although members of this type of team are happy and satisfied, in the long run it does not last.

2. ***task-oriented teams*** – this type of team is focused solely on accomplishing objectives, with most team members assuming specialist roles. These teams are highly productive in the short term. In the long term these teams do not last, because the concern for providing emotional and social support for team members is low (social and emotional needs and requirements of team members are ignored).

3. ***incompetent teams*** – teams in which the majority of team members are "fillers" who do not assume any role, either specialist or socio-emotional. These teams are extremely short-lived, with their lifespan depending on the emergence of a critical mass of filler members (minimal contribution to achieving objectives).

4. ***effective teams*** – teams in which members assume both specialist and social-emotional roles. Also called dual-role teams, they exhibit a high level of efficiency and performance. Moreover, these teams tend to have longevity, as they ensure both the fulfillment of objectives and the social and emotional needs of the group members.

Therefore, it is important for managers to constantly remind themselves that an efficient and effective team must include people who take on both specialist and socio-emotional roles. Social concern, i.e. maintaining a relaxed, humorous and cordial atmosphere within the team collectively, is just as important as a focus on achieving objectives.

Also, managers need to be aware that some people (members) are suited to one of the 2 roles, i.e. they work better if they take on one of the 2 roles; some

people have inclinations and concerns in the social area, while others have concerns in the specialized areas.

4.4. Internal processes influencing the team

The internal processes that influence the team are related to those aspects that basically influence the team's internal bonds and dynamism. On the other hand, these processes evolve over time (change over time) and are influenced by the team leader.

Internal processes that influence the team refer to the mechanisms, interactions, and dynamics taking place within the team that affect how it functions, makes decisions, and achieves objectives. These processes are key to understanding team behavior and team outcomes. They function as the "engine" that determines team effectiveness, cohesion, and performance. Conceptually, processes include both formal aspects (such as team structure and rules) and informal aspects (such as interpersonal dynamics and team culture). They can have either positive or negative impacts on team performance.

From a certain point of view, a number of key elements of internal processes can be identified, namely:

➢ **Communication:**
  – Exchange information, ideas and feedback between team members.
  – Quality, frequency and clarity of communication.

➢ **Decision-making:**
  – The process by which the team takes decisions (consensus, voting, delegation, etc.).
  – Degree of involvement of members in decisions.

➢ **Conflict resolution:**
  – How the team deals with and resolves differences.
  – Ability to turn conflicts into opportunities for improvement.

➢ **Cooperation and collaboration:**
  – Degree of synchronization and mutual support between members.
  – The ability to work together to achieve common goals.

➢ **Setting objectives:**
  – The process of defining team goals and aligning them with organizational objectives.
  – Clarity and realism of objectives.

➢ **Feedback and evaluation:**
  – How the team gives and receives feedback.
  – Continuous assessment of progress and performance.

➢ **Developing interpersonal relationships:**
  – Building trust, respect and team spirit.
  – Managing group dynamics and informal relationships.

➢ **Team culture:**
  – Team norms, values and accepted behaviors.
  – The general atmosphere and how it influences members.

➢ **Adaptability and innovation:**
  – The team's ability to adapt to change and adopt creative approaches.
  – Encourage new ideas and experimentation.

➢ **Resource management:**
  – How resources (time, money, tools) are allocated and used in the team.
  – Efficiency in the use of available resources.

➢ **Impact of internal processes on the team:**
  – Positive: Well managed processes can lead to effective communication, cohesion, trust and high performance.
  – Negative: Weak or dysfunctional processes can lead to conflict, lack of trust, demotivation and failure to achieve goals.

  For a project team, internal processes may include:

- How tasks are distributed between members (cooperation).
- How to discuss and solve problems that arise (communication and conflict resolution).
- How important decisions are made (decision making).
- How feedback is given after each stage of the project (feedback and evaluation).

As important, internal team processes are the foundation of team functioning and directly influence success or failure in achieving objectives. By understanding

and effectively managing these processes, the team can improve the performance, cohesion and satisfaction of its members.

From another perspective, in a more synthetic way, the internal processes that influence the team can be analyzed and identified through 4 dimensions (aspects), namely:

1. **Stages of team development.**
2. **Team cohesion.**
3. **Team norms and rules.**
4. **Conflicts within the team.**

4.4.1. Stages of team development

Obviously, any team after creation evolves and develops in different stages. A newly created team is different from a mature team. Over time, any team, because it is an open system (interacting with the internal/external environment), undergoes changes and change processes (Shuffler, Diazgranados, Maynard, & Salas, 2018). The stages of team development broadly represent a model that describes the process by which a group of individuals evolves to become a cohesive, effective, and productive team. These stages (Tuckman, 1965) illustrate the natural paths that a team goes through to achieve maturity and success. The stages of development model are important because it provides a framework for understanding team dynamics, helping to identify and manage the challenges that arise at each stage.

In the beginning, i.e. shortly after the team is created, team members get to know each other, establish roles and rules of team behavior, share tasks and take on certain activities. In this way, each team member gradually becomes part of the team's machinery that leads to the achievement of objectives. The challenge for any team manager (leader) is to understand the stages of team development and to decide on actions that support the improvement of team functioning. In this sense, each stage of team development has specific issues that the team leader needs to address.

In terms of stages of development, the team can go through 4 stages:

A. *Formative stage* – is considered the beginning period, a period of orientation, groping and getting to know. In this stage, team members tend to 'break the ice' in terms of communication and establishing possible friendships. It is

also at this stage that team members see which behaviors are accepted by other members. Uncertainty at this stage is high, with team members frequently accepting any kind or type of authority or power (whether the team leader's authority or power is formal or informal). The team members are dependent on the team until the moment they realize and become aware of what the rules of team behavior and conduct are. On the other hand, in this phase team members are mainly concerned with trying to find out what the expectations are (what the team expects from them). Throughout the training period, managers should allow time and freedom for team members to get to know, inform and establish contacts with each other.

B. **Storm stage** – at this stage the individual personalities of team members' surface. Team members become increasingly determined and categorical in clarifying their roles and their position in the team. This stage is marked by conflicts and disagreements. Team members generate these conflicts in an attempt to gain a more advantageous or powerful position or to impose themselves on the rest of the team. Often team members may even disagree with the team's mission and objectives. Many times, team members, in order to gain respect and position of power, resort to alliance and coalition tactics against others. At this stage, sub-groups are formed that come into conflict, which can contribute to team breakdown and destruction. In fact, conflict within the team is the basic feature of this phase. How well the team knows how to defuse conflict will determine its further development to other stages. During this phase, team leaders should encourage the participation of every team member. Thus, team members should be allowed to get involved in team discussions and debates even if they generate conflicts or disagreements, be encouraged to propose ideas or solutions. Last but not least, at this stage, team members should be encouraged to work as a team, i.e. to try to adapt and accept the personalities of other people in the team.

C. **Normalization stage** – along the normalization stage conflicts start to be resolved and defused, harmony and unity in the team appear again. There is consensus and acceptance about who has the power, who is the leader, what are the hierarchical positions of the team members. In other words, each member of the team begins to accept his or her position in the team,

i.e. hierarchical positions in relation to the rest of the members. This phase is short-lived, as managers should be concerned with developing team unity, i.e. helping team members to accept the team's values and norms (rules).

D. *Performance Stage* **–** this stage is characterized by the fact that the team members are most concerned with solving and resolving problems, i.e. achieving the team's objectives. In this stage, team members are fully engaged in accomplishing their objectives and tasks. This stage is the stage of maximum output and productivity, which is also achieved through team collaboration and cooperation. The role of the team leader at this stage is to coordinate and guide the team towards performance.

The 4 stages of development normally occur one after the other, although the time period of each phase differs. There are often exceptions in the sense that there may be teams that under pressure from other causes do not reach the last stage of development or may go through the 4 stages extremely quickly.

Stages of team development are influenced by a number of factors that can speed up, slow down or even disrupt the team's development process. These factors may be internal (related to the team itself) or external (related to the environment in which the team operates). The most important factors influencing the stages of development:

A. Internal Factors:

Factor 1. *Team composition:*
– Diversity of members (experience, skills, personality, values).
– Team size (smaller teams tend to progress faster).
– Compatibility between members.

Factor 2. *Team leader:*
– Leadership style (authoritarian, democratic, transformational etc.).
– The leader's ability to manage conflict and facilitate communication.
– Degree of involvement and support from the leader.

Factor 3. *Communication:*
– Quality and frequency of communication between members.
– Openness to constructive feedback and discussion.
– Effective communication channels.

Factor 4. *Roles and responsibilities:*
- Clarity in defining roles and expectations.
- Balanced distribution of tasks.
- Flexibility in adapting to changing roles.

Factor 5. *Level of trust and cohesion:*
- The degree of mutual trust between members.
- A sense of belonging and solidarity.

Factor 6. *Attitude and motivation of members:*
- Level of involvement and commitment of members.
- Willingness to work together and overcome differences.

B. External Factors:

Factor 1. *Organizational context:*
- Organizational culture (openness to innovation, flexibility, traditionalism, etc.).
- Available resources (time, budget, tools).
- Organizational pressures and demands.

Factor 2. *Team objectives and goals:*
- Clarity and relevance of objectives.
- Degree of complexity of tasks.
- Align the team's objectives with those of the organization.

Factor 3. *Working environment:*
- The physical space (whether it is conducive to collaboration or not).
- Available technology (communication and collaboration tools).
- The presence of distractions or stressors in the environment.

Factor 4. *External changes:*
- Changes in organizational structure (restructuring, mergers, etc.).
- Changes in market or customer requirements.
- Economic, social or political factors affecting the organization.

Factor 5. *Management support:*
- Availability of resources and management support.
- Recognizing and rewarding team efforts.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see how different factors influence different stages of development. Thus:

A. In the Forming stage: factors such as clarity of objectives, team composition and leadership style can determine how quickly the team establishes its foundations.

B. In the Conflict stage: effective communication, the leader's ability to manage differences and the level of trust can reduce tensions and help the team to move more quickly to the next stage.

C. At the Standardization stage: Cohesion, clarity of roles and organizational support are essential to strengthen standards and collaboration.

D. In the Performance stage: resources, motivation and goal alignment ensure that high performance is maintained.

It should be noted that by carefully managing these factors, leaders and team members can facilitate a harmonious and effective progression through all stages of development.

4.4.2. Team cohesion

Another important aspect related to internal team processes is team cohesion. The term *team cohesion* refers to those aspects that contribute to team members being attracted and motivated to the team, i.e. that create an attractiveness among team members to be part of the team. It is no longer an enigma that highly cohesive teams have high performance and productivity, i.e. they are satisfied and motivated in their work. In contrast, teams with a low degree of cohesion are less committed and engaged in their own or the team's work, are less motivated and satisfied.

On the one hand, team cohesion refers to the degree to which members of a group are attracted to each other and motivated to stay in the group. It implies a sense of solidarity, mutual trust and commitment to common team goals. Cohesion is a key factor that influences both member satisfaction and collective performance (Forsyth, 2014) . On the other hand, team cohesion can be defined as the force that holds members of a group together, characterized by emotional bonds, interpersonal attraction, and a sense of belonging (Carron & Brawley, 2000) . Cohesion reflects the extent to which team members feel connected and committed to accomplishing common goals.

Group cohesion can be viewed as a key emergent state that is associated with many important antecedents and outcomes (Kim, Panza, & Evans, 2021) . In this sense, there are certain determinants of cohesion, that is, factors that influence cohesion.

In fact, one of the factors' influencing cohesion is the **level of team interaction**. The more developed the interactions (frequent and team-wide), the higher the level or degree of team cohesion. Through the contacts and discussions, they have or participate in, team members have the opportunity to get to know each other, exchange ideas and build friendships.

A second influencing factor is the **shared goals and objectives** (which they have in common). If team members agree on the same objectives and goals they will develop a high level of cohesion, because it is easier and easier to agree on what and how the team's objectives should be achieved (people who have things in common will develop a more cohesive group compared to a group of people who have nothing in common).

A third factor influencing cohesion is the **personal attraction** that team members have for one or another member of the team. Personal attraction to one or another team member means that team members who share the same values, way of thinking, attitude and behavior will feel comfortable together. Team cohesion therefore increases the more team members share the same affinities.

According to another approach, the factors that influence the level of cohesion in a team can be categorized as: (1) internal factors (related to team dynamics) and (2) external factors (related to the environment in which the team operates). In this sense:

A. Internal factors influencing team cohesion:

Factor 1. *Effective Communication:* open and transparent communication between team members enhances mutual trust and understanding, strengthening cohesion (Tuckman, 1965) ;

Factor 2. *Clarity of Roles and Objectives:* when roles and objectives are clearly defined, team members feel more confident and motivated to work together (Hackman, Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances, 2002) ;

Factor 3. *Team Size:* smaller teams tend to have a higher level of cohesion because interactions are more frequent and personal (Forsyth, 2014) ;

Factor 4. *Similarity and Complementarity of Members:* similarity in values, attitudes and goals can increase cohesion, but also complementarity of skills can contribute to a positive balance (Carron & Brawley, 2000) ;

Factor 5. *Mutual Trust*: trust between team members is a pillar of cohesion as it enhances collaboration and reduces conflict (Costa, 2003) ;

B. External factors influencing team cohesion:

Factor 1. *Team Leader:* leadership style (e.g. transformational or democratic) can influence cohesion through the way the leader inspires, supports and motivates the team (Bass. & Avolio, 1994) ;

Factor 2. *Organizational Culture:* organizational culture that promotes collaboration, mutual recognition and support enhances team cohesion (Schein, 2010) ;

Factor 3. *Available Resources:* access to adequate resources (time, budget, tools) can reduce frustration and increase cohesion, as the team can focus on goals (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) ;

Factor 4. *Work Environment:* positive and collaborative working environment, tends to encourage interactions and trust and in this way help to increase cohesion (West, 2012) ;

Factor 5. *External Pressures:* external challenges (such as deadlines or competition) can increase cohesion if the team perceives them as opportunities to work together (Mullen & Copper, 1994) ;

Therefore, we can say that team cohesion, as a process, is influenced by a combination of internal (such as communication, trust and role clarity) and external (such as leadership, organizational culture and resources) factors.

In terms of the consequences that cohesion has, it influences 2 main aspects:

1. **Motivation** – as a general rule, motivation is high in highly cohesive teams. This is due to high communication and interaction between team members, dedication to working together, high climate of friendship and harmony among the team collectively. Moreover, some studies show that a high degree of cohesion positively influences commitment, satisfaction, trust, trust, collaboration and task attitudes. These academic sources provide a solid basis for understanding this relationship and the mechanisms by which cohesion enhances team motivation.

2. **Productivity and performance** – although one would expect high levels of cohesion to have a major influence on team productivity and performance, in fact things are more complex and confusing. Studies have shown that, although the level of cohesion does have an impact on team productivity and performance levels, it cannot be considered as the fundamental factor determining these levels. First, in highly cohesive teams, productivity tends to be more uniform.

This is because the team exerts certain pressures that lead to greater conformity. Teams that do not have such a high degree of cohesion do not exert this control over their members and therefore they tend to have a large difference between different individual productivities. It is also important to keep in mind that highly cohesive teams can have the potential to be highly productive and highly performing, the level of productivity and performance, however, is dependent on the relationship between the leader and the rest of the team members. Thus, high cohesion does not necessarily and automatically lead to high productivity and performance. In this respect, some specialized studies show that teams with a high level of cohesion are more productive and perform better when team members feel that the leader or manager is supportive and concerned about their needs and requirements. Conversely, the same highly cohesive team experiences low levels of productivity and performance when team members feel some hostility and adversity the manager gives the group leader about the team members. Last but not least, poor management geared towards low individual performance norms and standards leads to the team, no matter how high the degree of cohesion, underperforming in line with the imposed performance norms and standards.

3. **Increased Commitment and Involvement**: members of teams with a high level of cohesion are more committed and involved in team activities because they feel part of a cohesive group and share common goals (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) .

4. **Improved Job Satisfaction:** cohesion contributes to a positive work environment, which increases members' satisfaction and thus their motivation (Carron & Brawley, 2000) .

5. **Social Support and Trust:** in a cohesive team, members support and trust each other, which increases motivation to contribute and overcome challenges (Costa, 2003)

6. **Reduced Stress and Fatigue:** cohesion provides a less stressful working environment, which keeps members energized and motivated (Cohen & Wills, 1985) .

7. **Increased Sense of Belonging**: members of cohesive teams feel more connected to the group, which increases their desire to contribute and stay motivated (Forsyth, 2014) .

8. **Encouraging Collaboration and Sharing Ideas:** in a cohesive team, members are more willing to collaborate and share ideas, which increases motivation to work together towards common goals (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) .

9. **Recognition and Validation:** in a cohesive team, members feel recognized and validated for their contributions, which increases their motivation to continue to perform (Hackman, Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances, 2002) .

10. **Positive Attitude towards Tasks:** cohesion promotes a positive attitude towards team tasks because members feel more involved and responsible (Mullen & Copper, 1994) .

11. **Member Satisfaction:** members of cohesive teams feel more satisfied and involved because they feel valued and supported by their peers (Carron & Brawley, 2000) .

12. **Member Retention:** cohesive teams have a lower turnover rate because members are more likely to stay in an environment where they feel connected and valued (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003) .

13. **Collaboration and Communication:** cohesion enhances the level of collaboration and open communication between members, facilitating the exchange of ideas and problem solving (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) .

14. **Resilience and Adaptability:** cohesive teams are more resilient in the face of challenges and adapt more easily to change because members support and trust each other (West, 2012) .

15. **Involvement in Team Tasks:** cohesive team members are more motivated to fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to common goals (Hackman, Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances, 2002) .

16. **Conflict Reduction:** cohesion helps to manage conflict constructively because members have a high level of trust and mutual respect (Tuckman, 1965) .

17. **Creativity and Innovation:** cohesive teams are more likely to generate new and innovative ideas because members feel safe to express their opinions and take risks (Amabile, 1988) .

18. **Members' Psychological Health:** cohesion contributes to a positive working environment, reducing stress and improving members' psychological well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985) .

Team cohesion therefore influences a wide range of aspects, from performance and member satisfaction to resilience, creativity and adaptability. These academic sources provide a solid basis for understanding the impact of cohesion on team dynamics and outcomes.

4.4.3. Team rules and regulations

On the one hand, the concept of 'team norms and rules' is, broadly speaking, a set of principles and standards that team members adopt to guide behavior, communication and collaboration within the group. These rules help create an effective working environment, promote individual and collective responsibility and facilitate the achievement of common goals. Team norms and rules, on the other hand, are basically standards and rules of conduct shared by all team members that guide and regulate their behavior. Specifically, team norms are concerned with how team members should interact, communicate and behave as team members. Last but not least, team norms and team rules aim at a set of assumptions and expectations that help team members to identify the types of behavior that they should adopt.

In general, team norms and rules are predominantly informal issues. They are not formally regulated as are, for example, working procedures and regulations. These norms and rules are important for the team because they define the boundaries between behaviors that are accepted by the team and those that are not accepted by the team. Team norms and rules, on the other hand, identify the team's core values, clarify role expectations in the team, and last but not least help the team survive. These norms and rules start to be created and developed through the first contacts and interactions between new team members, i.e. the first formal/informal meetings. Thus, it is important for a team leader (manager) to try to encourage, prompt and map out, as early as possible, the interactions that lead to the establishment of those norms and rules that help the team to succeed. Last but not least, team norms and rules that govern daily behavior is not a static process but evolves all the time, showing team members what is accepted and what is not, what are the directions of action and ways to solve problems. There are 3 ways of developing team norms and rules:

a. **Critical events –** frequently, critical events in the team's history set an important precedent. For example: in a wood-processing company, a worker

on the planning machine is injured due to carelessness. This incident leads to the establishment of a rule or norm among the team regarding their work on the planning machine.

b. **Early behaviors** – the first behaviors that occur in the team frequently will set a precedent for setting certain expectations later. For example: in one company, the team leader, in the first meetings with the team, liked to provide solutions to the problem by himself alone. This behavior became so ingrained so quickly and deeply that at every other meeting that followed, team members stopped "bothering" to find new solutions.

c. **Explicit wording and explicit statements** – this allows the team leader to explicitly and clearly convey the conditions or rules that must be followed by all team members. In fact, explicit statements symbolize what matters to be followed and owned and therefore what is considered to have impact.

4.4.4. Conflicts within the team

Team conflicts refer to misunderstandings, disagreements or tensions that arise between team members. These conflicts can have different causes and can manifest themselves in different forms. According to some authors, the most important skill and competency that a team leader needs to possess is the ability to defuse or manage conflicts within the team (Draft & Marcic, 2009).

Conflict, on the other hand, refers to antagonistic interactions in which one part of the team member blocks the intentions or goals of another part of the team (Robbins S. P., 1990) . Where people work together, they will interact and therefore inevitably conflicts, harsh exchanges and major disagreements will arise. Managing these conflicts is a great challenge for the team leader, as the way conflicts are resolved will further determine the success or failure of the team, and the maintenance or dissolution of the team.

Conflicts within the team, in many cases, emerge as a form of fierce competition between team members (as a form of rivalry), although to a certain extent these competitions have a beneficial impact on the team. In this sense, when team members seek only harmony and avoid conflict, at some point they will no longer be able to cope with problems because no one will have the courage to question the solutions adopted that are not appropriate to solve the problem. Thus, a low level of conflict within the team leads to poor and inappropriate decision-making.

In fact, some studies (Koehler, 1984) have emphasized that teams with low levels of conflict are associated with poor decision-making. In general, too much conflict that is not properly managed or defused can damage team morale and productivity. In a team in which conflict is frequent, team members' interest in achieving goals is minimal, with team members' energy being expended on conflict rather than on achieving goals.

Therefore, related to conflicts in the organization, leaders or managers should keep in mind the following:

– Conflicts are inherent aspects of people working together and cannot be avoided.
– Conflicts can have a positive or negative impact on the team, depending on their intensity and frequency.
– Leaders or team managers have a major duty to be concerned with finding and maintaining a balance between conflict and cooperation within the team. Too little conflict can lead to lower or diminished performance (because the team does not benefit from an appropriate mix of opinions and ideas), and too much conflict can also reduce team productivity (because it reduces the effort of cooperation and collaboration between team members).

In terms of factors that generate conflict within the team, we can mention the following aspects (Raboca, 2013) :

1. **Competition for resources** (resource allocation) – as in any organization resources are scarce, the way resources are allocated generates conflicts. This also applies to teams. When team members have to compete for resources, conflicts inevitably arise.
2. **Communication disruptions or breakdowns** – low levels of communication can lead to misperceptions or misunderstandings. Disruptions and lack of communication can occur in any team. Thus, in the absence of an adequate level of communication the exchange of information and ideas is reduced, the interaction of team members is reduced, personal relationships become more reduced. All these things can ultimately become sources of conflict. In general, when 2 people do not communicate there is a high risk of conflict between them.
3. **Personality** (character) **clashes** – Personality clashes occur when certain team members, for reasons of self-interest or due to a high level of frustration, against the background of strong, vain and proud personalities, try to impose

their authority in the hope of gaining a better hierarchical position or something personal (respect and honor from team members (or the boss) or some material or non-material benefits). Many studies have emphasized that personality clashes are fundamentally caused by differences (incompatibilities) in personality, values and attitudes and are the main source of team conflicts. Although some personality differences can be resolved, many of these differences are difficult to defuse. The best way to avoid conflict in the latter case (partial defusing of personality clashes) is to separate the parties completely so that they have no opportunity to interact.

4. **Differences of objective or opinion** – as each individual has his or her own opinion on certain issues, these may conflict with the opinions of others. Even simple and limited discussions and debates of ideas or opinions can degenerate into irreconcilable conflicts. On the other hand, all of us are beholden to our own interests, pursuing different personal goals. Conflicts often arise when we feel that we are being restricted in achieving our personal interests or goals.

From an impact point of view, conflicts can not only be seen as having a negative impact, in some cases they also have a positive aspect. Moreover, conflicts within the team, as mentioned, are a natural part of group dynamics and if managed effectively, can lead to stronger collaboration and better results. Therefore, the impact of conflict can be: (1) Negative: the case of high intensity or unresolved conflicts that can lead to low morale, increased stress and reduced team effectiveness; (2) Positive: the case of small or properly managed conflicts that can stimulate innovation, improve communication and stimulate positive solutions.

To manage or resolve conflicts, a number of ways can be used such as (the list is not exhaustive):

1. **Open communication**: promoting an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their opinions and concerns. This helps the team be able to identify and address conflicts constructively, resolving misunderstandings and strengthening collaboration. Managing conflict in a constructive manner resolves not only existing misunderstandings but also leads to strengthened collaboration between team members. Clearly, this way involves encouraging sharing of managing conflict primarily involves promoting or encouraging the process of sharing ideas and

perspectives – ensuring each party has the conflicting parties being given the opportunity and opportunity to present their views – and active listening, where conflicting parties are encouraged to ask questions and provide constructive feedback to better understand each other's perspectives.

2. **Mediation**: the intervention of a leader or mediator to help resolve disagreements. This method relies on active listening, with the leader or mediator allowing and encouraging conflicting parties to express their views fully. An important role of the mediator is to ensure everyone has enough time to talk without interruption and that the discussions do not degenerate into name-calling or personal attacks.

3. **Clarifying roles**: ensuring all team members understand and assume their responsibilities. The leader's role includes defining each party's responsibilities clearly and establishing communication protocols (formal or informal meetings) to foster respect for specialist roles among conflicting parties.

5. MODELS OF TEAM EFFICIENCY

5.1. The "Iceberg" model

The evolution of conflicts has often been compared to an iceberg (figuratively speaking). This model implies that only a small part of the conflicts is visible (as in the iceberg case, only a small part is visible (above water) and about 90% of it is underwater). Thus, using the metaphor of the iceberg, we can say that the center of gravity of conflicts is located in the unseen part of the conflicts that are not visible or out of sight. It is these unseen parts of the conflict that determine and influence the size and dynamics of the conflict.

The 'iceberg' model is often used to show that only part of what occurs in a conflict and the dynamics of conflict are directly accessible. The other parts of this dynamic must be more guessed or interpreted (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). More specifically, the 'iceberg' model, used to explain conflict dynamics, suggests that only a small part of the conflict is usually visible, and it is the hidden part that indicates its true extent, and which is necessary to know to choose the right tool in conflict management.

This model considers 2 planes in which conflicts occur (Fig. 5.1):

1. **the tip of the iceberg –** The tip of the iceberg is the visible part that represents the social and objective level of the conflict, summarizing the facts that are complained about, the claims made, and the obvious, noticeable behavior.
2. **the underwater part –** the unseen part of the conflict, representing the subjective, psychological level, which includes fears, frustrations, insecurities, desires, feelings, aspirations, "taboo" aspects that are not confessed and which, if not revealed, will remain decisive in the conflictual behavior.

The Visible Side of the Iceberg – represents aspects of the team that are easily observable and measurable and include:

- Results: team performance, objectives achieved, projects completed.
- Communication: how team members interact with each other and with other teams or departments.

- Structure: how the team is structured, roles and responsibilities of each member.
- Processes: the working methods and procedures used by the team.

The Hidden Side of the Iceberg – represents aspects of the team that are less visible but have a significant impact on team performance and cohesion. This part includes:

- Culture: the values, norms and behaviors accepted within the team.
- Motivation: Factors that motivate team members, such as recognition, professional development or salary.
- Conflict: differences of opinion, tensions and how they are managed.
- Trust: the level of trust between team members, which influences collaboration and communication.
- Emotions: The feelings and emotional states of team members that can affect productivity and morale.
- Personal Values: The individual beliefs and values of each member, which may influence how they interact with the team.

If an individual's position, as an attitude, is relatively easy to identify much harder to identify are the assumptions and aspirations that determine that position. On the other hand, any position taken by one party (individual or group of individuals) may give rise to or generate some opposition on the part of the other party. This opposition often generates conflict – the position of the first party interacts with the position of the other party.

On the other hand, each position of the parties is determined, in part, by 2 major aspects, namely: (1) the assumptions and preconceptions that the parties have; (2) the aspirations and interests of the parties.

1. Assumptions and preconceptions

In some cases, one party's assumptions and preconceptions (what that party believes) about other parties can be totally misinterpreted, misunderstood or misanalysed. This can lead to or generate conflict. A party's positions are often fueled by certain assumptions and preconceptions. These often include many assumptions about the intentions of the other party. It is extremely difficult to correctly guess another person's needs and intentions. In this respect, it is essential to check and clarify the other party's intentions directly (obviously through direct discussions and contacts) rather than assuming or guessing their intentions.

2. Aspirations and interests

Diverging aspirations and interests can obviously create or lead to conflict. It is natural for each of us to react aggressively (reactively) and automatically to the rigid position of the other, to react promptly and incisively when our aspirations and interests compete with or are blocked by the aspirations and interests of the other party.

However, identifying and linking the aspirations and interests of one party with the aspirations and interests of the other is the starting point and the basis for defusing conflicts. In practical terms, by identifying, finding and embracing common aspirations and interests on all sides, the foundations are laid both for working well together and for deterring conflict.
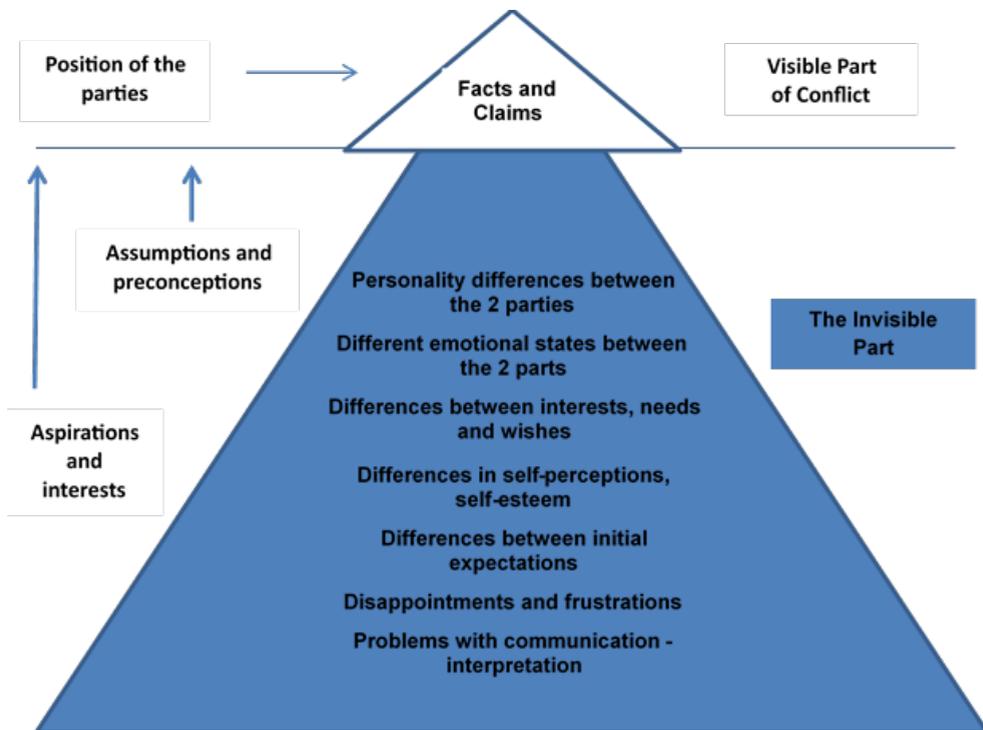

Figure 5.1. *Dimensions (plans) of the "Iceberg" model*

Last but not least, it should be remembered that this model helps leaders and team members to recognize and manage factors that can influence team performance, morale and cohesion. More specifically, using the Iceberg model helps to:

1. ***Identifying Hidden Factors:*** helps leaders identify hidden aspects that can affect team performance, such as culture, motivation, trust and emotions. These factors are often ignored or underestimated but can have a significant impact on the team.

2. ***Improve Communication***: By understanding hidden issues, team communication can be enhanced. Leaders can adapt their communication style to address these hidden issues and create a more transparent and collaborative working environment.

3. ***Conflict Management***: the model helps to identify and resolve hidden conflicts that can affect the team. By understanding tensions and differences of opinion, leaders can intervene to mediate conflicts and maintain a positive atmosphere.

4. ***Organizational Culture Development:*** by understanding hidden values and norms, leaders can work to improve the team's organizational culture. Fostering trust, collaboration and a positive work environment can lead to a more cohesive and productive team.

5. ***Diagnosing Problems:*** the model can help leaders diagnose hidden problems that may be affecting team performance. For example, if the team is not achieving objectives, the problem may be related to a toxic culture or lack of trust between members.

6. ***Improve Motivation:*** by understanding the factors that motivate team members, leaders can take steps to improve morale and maintain high levels of engagement. This can include recognition, professional development or other forms of motivation.

7. ***Creating a Positive Work Environment:*** by addressing both visible and hidden issues, leaders can create a positive and supportive work environment. This can lead to greater employee satisfaction and improved team performance.

8. ***Promoting Trust:*** The model emphasizes the importance of trust within the team. By understanding and managing the factors that influence trust, leaders can create a more cohesive and effective team.

Linked exercise using the "Iceberg Model", we can diagnose and solve the hidden problems that contribute to this situation:

In a campaign, a 10-member software development team is formed, including developers, testers and a project manager. The problem with this team is that

it fails to meet project delivery deadlines, leading to delays and customer dissatisfaction.

Step 1: *Identifying Visible Aspects:*

i. Visible results: the team misses deadlines.

ii. Communication: team members communicate little during meetings and do not seem to collaborate effectively.

iii. Structure: roles and responsibilities are clearly defined but there does not seem to be effective collaboration between departments.

iv. Processes: working methods are well established but not consistently followed.

Step 2: *Exploring Hidden Aspects:*

i. Culture: there is a culture of conflict avoidance, where team members avoid discussing issues openly.

ii. Motivation: Many team members are demotivated due to a lack of recognition and constant negative feedback.

iii. Conflict: There are hidden tensions between developers and testers, as developers feel that testers are too critical, and testers feel that developers do not take their feedback seriously.

iv. Trust: The level of trust within the team is low, which leads to ineffective communication and poor collaboration.

v. Emotions: a number of team members feel frustrated and stressed due to pressure to meet deadlines.

vi. Personal Values: some team members have different values regarding quality and speed of product delivery, which leads to conflicts.

Step 3: *Problem Diagnosis – Problems Identified:*

i. Conflict avoidance culture: team members do not discuss issues openly, which leads to a build-up of tension.

ii. Demotivation: lack of recognition and constant negative feedback affects team morale.

iii. Tensions between departments: developers and testers do not collaborate effectively because of differences of opinion.

iv. Lack of trust: low levels of trust lead to ineffective communication and poor collaboration.

v. Stress and frustration: the pressure to meet deadlines affects team members emotionally.

Step 4: *Improving Communication and Conflict Management – Actions:*

i. Regular Feedback Meetings: organizing regular meetings where team members can openly discuss issues and provide constructive feedback.

ii. Recognition and Motivation: introducing a recognition system to motivate team members and improve morale.

iii. Communication Workshops: organizing workshops with team members to improve communication skills and promote a culture of collaboration.

iv. Conflict Mediation: team leader intervention to mediate conflicts between developers and testers, promoting mutual understanding.

v. Team Building Activities: organizing team building activities to improve team trust and cohesion.

Step 5: *Monitoring and Evaluation – Monitoring:*

i. Continuous Feedback: soliciting continuous feedback from team members to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken.

ii. Performance Indicators: use performance indicators to monitor progress and identify any new problems.

iii. Evaluation Meetings: organizing regular meetings to evaluate progress and adapt strategies as needed.

In our case example: using the "Iceberg Model", the software development team was able to identify and address hidden issues that contributed to project delivery delays. By improving communication, managing conflict and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, the team was able to improve performance and meet delivery deadlines. This example illustrates how the 'Iceberg' model can be used to diagnose and solve team problems, leading to greater cohesion and efficiency.

5.2. Johari Window Model

The Johari Window model is, in fact, a **personal or collective development model** with a focus on **communication and teamwork.** The model is based on the premise that if teams collaborate, interact and communicate, then team performance develops, and team cohesion increases. On the other hand, the Johari Window model is essential for team development, because in addition to developing the level of open communication, it also helps to build trust and

improve collaboration between team members. By increasing self-awareness and transparency in interpersonal relationships, teams can become more effective and less cohesive.

The model, in general description, is based on 2 main types of information as starting variables, namely:

1. information related to what we communicate about ourselves.
2. information about what others perceive about us.

Based on the 2 types of variables the model consists of 4 quadrants – each area forming a window (also known as Johari windows). These quadrants (windows) are determined by the following information namely (Fig. 5.2.):

1. what a person knows about himself and is known by others ("I know, and others know").
2. what is unknown to the person about him/herself but known to others ("I don't know but others know").
3. what a person knows about themselves, but others don't know ("I know but others don't know").
4. what neither the person nor the others know about that person ("I don't know, and the others don't know").

		Self (requested feedback)	
		Information known to me	Information known to me
group (Self-disclosure Giving feedback)	**Information they know**	**ARENA** (I know and others know)	**OPEN ZONE** (I don't know, and others do)
	Information they don't know	**FACADE** (I know and others don't)	**NECUNUNOSCUT** (I don't know, and the others don't know)

Figure 5.2. *The 4 quadrants of the "Johari window" model*
(Adapted from (Beganu & Nițan, 2006, p. 3)

1. 'Arena' – contains information about the individual, known to both the individual and the group. This window is characterized by open and honest exchanges of information between the individual and the group, this behavior is public and accessible to all members. Arena increases significantly in size as the level of trust between individuals or between an individual and the group increases.

Group members share more and more information, especially relevant data about themselves.

Arena is, basically, what you know about yourself and what others know about you. In the arena you share information about yourself: facts, feelings, motives, behaviors, needs, and desires. The arena is good for communication and teamwork. Thus, in the arena, you share as much information (relevant to the group) as possible and actively listen to each other's information. This will create a more open atmosphere and limit the number of personal interpretations and assumptions (more or less correct) about yourself.

2. The "blind zone" is what you don't know about yourself, but others notice about you – for example: dirt stains on your coat. This zone contains useful information that gives us an "outsider's" view of ourselves, helping us to see ourselves more objectively. On the other hand, this area contains information about the individual's personality that they don't know, but that the group is likely to have – your habit of avoiding your interlocutor's gaze in a discussion or clearing your voice whenever you are preparing to communicate certain ideas or opinions. Naturally, there is a possibility that as a result of an individual's participation or interaction with the group, he or she may transmit information and data that he or she is not aware of. This is due to the fact that interaction and communication is not only about verbal but also non-verbal communication, and the reception of data and information by the group can also be indirect, through observation for example, without the individual being fully aware of the type of information being transmitted.

Last but not least, the "Blind Zone" is diminished by expanding the "Arena" and the "Façade" and diminishing the "Unknown" zone. One of the methods of diminishing the "Blind Zone" is the constant solicitation of information through group feedback. If the individual constantly asks for feedback and shows openness to the information contained in it, the size of the "Blind Zone" will decrease.

3. "Facade" – this is where all the information that you know about yourself, but others don't, comes in or is contained. Each individual holds certain information that we want to keep only to ourselves (data and information that is intimate in nature or irrelevant to the group). It is justifiable for each individual to have a private life or to decide what information should or should not be made known

to the group. On the other hand, there are situations in which the fear of not being hurt, rejected, attacked, mocked leads to an increase in the "Facade" zone. Obviously, we all have a "Front" zone – in some people this zone is more developed than in others. We all want to be perceived positively and with a high level of professional and individual competence by team members, and the fear that exposing one's own emotional feelings, reasoning and reactions to the group or within the group could damage and change the positive perception leads, in fact, to the growth of the "Facade" zone.

The method of diminishing this area is also by sharing information and data – especially about our fears and fears. Tell others about what you do, what you feel, who you are and communication will become easier. We can therefore reduce the dimensions of this area by publicly expressing our own perceptions, emotional feelings and unambiguous opinions about aspects of group membership or activity, or about the personality of the individual.

Basically, each member will have to reveal to the group his exact position. The other participants no longer have to "guess" the meaning of the individual's actions. As the individual reveals more and more about his or her own personality, the "Facade" zone will decrease in size at the expense of the "Arena" and "Blind Zone".

4. "Unknown" – this is where the information that we don't yet know about ourselves or that others haven't had the opportunity to discover. This area is considered to be the most difficult area to explore, as it has not yet been realized. This is where your unsuspected resources are – things you could do but haven't even tried. There are beliefs and beliefs about yourself and the world that you consider "normal" and no longer question. This zone of "Unknown" contains elements related to the person's personality and temperament, interpersonal dynamics, early childhood memories, latent potentialities and abilities, and other kinds of unknown personal resources. The internal boundaries of this zone change in relation to the amount of feedback desired and accepted. The individual is very unlikely to be aware of all aspects of his or her own personality or self. The method of diminishing this area is personal development. Through sustained personal development, effort and approach we can diminish this zone, i.e. explore and bring to the surface important skills and abilities.

Therefore, as a conclusion, using the Johari model in teams can bring the following benefits:

1. ***Improved communication:*** increasing the open zone through feedback and self-disclosure leads to better mutual understanding and reduced conflict (Luft, 1969) .

2. ***Building trust:*** by sharing personal and professional information, team members become closer and develop a climate of trust and mutual respect (Goleman, 2006) .

3. ***Reducing the blind spot:*** peer feedback helps to realize one's own weaknesses and to improve them, which contributes to professional development (Tjosvold, 1991) .

4. ***Increase team cohesion:*** a team with a larger open area will have a healthier dynamic where members feel comfortable sharing ideas and collaborating effectively (Wheelan, 2016) .

5. ***Increased performance:*** teams that apply this model become more effective because members better understand each other's strengths and areas for improvement, which optimizes tasks and responsibilities (Lencioni, 2010) .

Personality types modeled on Johari WINDOW

The Johari Window panels are interdependent. Changing the size of one of the panels will inevitably change the size of the corresponding panels. For example: when we have reduced the size of the "Blind Area" or the size of the "Facade", by giving and soliciting feedback, we have increased the size of the "Arena". In the process of giving and soliciting feedback we tend to pay more attention to one action at the expense of the other. This will create an imbalance between giving and asking for feedback. The imbalance thus created could affect the effectiveness of the individual in the group or the reactions of group members to the behaviors. The amount of feedback shared and the pace at which we give/receive feedback influence the size and shape of the "Arena".

Due to the dynamic processes of communication and interaction (working together) between team members, the level and weight of requests and giving feedback (which are often asymmetrical or disproportionate), resulting in four types of behavior (in terms of communication/interaction), namely:

1. **the ideal participant.**
2. **the 'interrogative' participant.**
3. **the "arrogant" participant.**
4. **"secret" type participant.**

1. Ideal Participant – reflects a high degree of trust placed by the individual in the group or in any relationship that is meaningful to them. In this case the dimensions of the 'Arena' are high due to the increased level of trust in the group. The norms developed in the group governing the giving and receiving of feedback facilitate such exchanges.

The sheer size of the "Arena" suggests that much of the individual's behavior is accessible to group members. Because of this openness, other group members do not have to interpret (misinterpret) or project personal meanings onto the individual's behaviors. They understand his or her actions and ideas and are aware of the person's high willingness to give and receive feedback. The more openness the person shows in contact with others, the less games and groping there will be in the relationship.
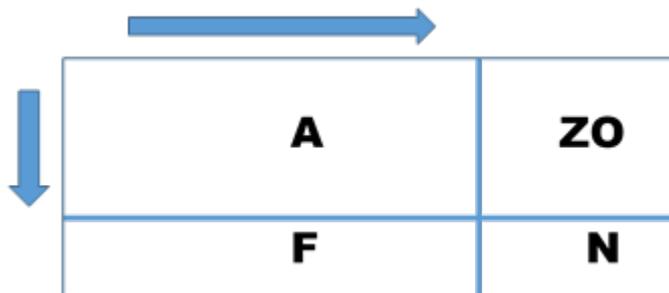
Figure 5.3. *The ideal participant*

2. Interrogative Type Participant – the behavior of those individuals who participate in group activity primarily by asking questions without providing feedback. The "Facade" dimension of individuals situated in this behavior is related to the amount of information they provide to other members. The individual is likely to react to the group norm regulating minimal participation in the activity by asking for information. These individuals will intervene with questions such as:

- "What do you think about that?",
- "How would you react if you were in my shoes?",

- "How do you feel about what I just said?",
- "What do you think about the group?".

The individual corresponding to this window will tend to find out other people's position before expressing their own opinion. Exposure from one's own point of view is rare in these individuals, which makes it difficult for the group to perceive this aspect. At a certain point in the group's development, 'questioners' were asked by other members to answer questions such as: "You always ask me how I feel about what is going on, but you never tell me what you think". The specific style of the 'questioner' may ultimately evoke reactions of irritation, distrust or apprehension.

Figure 5.4. *Questioning Participant*

3. Arrogant Type Participant – behavior specific to individuals who participate in group activity mainly by giving a lot of feedback to team members and require minimal feedback from them. Individuals characterized as "arrogant" may express opinions related to other members, as well as their own affective feelings concerning group activity and their stance on the topics discussed in the group.

These individuals may also be overly critical of the behavior of other team members or the team as a whole and expect these actions to be perceived as open and appropriate. For this reason, these individuals are perceived as insensitive to feedback or simply give the impression that they do not perceive the messages they receive from colleagues. Individuals in this pattern are either difficult listeners or respond to feedback in such a way that group members will be reluctant to provide further information. The latter will show fear, frustration, or will complain or try to leave the team.

As a result, "arrogant" people <u>are not aware of how they relate to others</u> or the intensity of the impact of their own behaviors on group members. Because**,** these behaviors are not corrected, when receiving feedback, they will appear elusive, false or inaccessible. They will continue to act ineffectively due to the adoption of one-way communication (from "arrogant" to others). Since these individuals show a lack of acceptance of the group's guiding cues, they fail to identify behaviors that require change. On the other hand, because of their behavior, "arrogant" individuals will be sources of conflict within the team at all times.
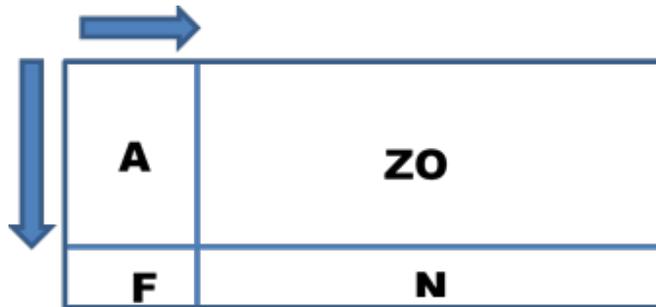
Figure 5.5. *The Arrogant Participant*

4. The Secretive type of participant – this behavior is specific to the person who participates in the team activity simply by participating and observing. Individuals do not have much information about themselves and the group. These people are the "silent" members of the team, the people who do not ask for or give feedback.

Team members often find it difficult to identify where these individuals sit in the group and how to relate to them. These individuals seem to have a protective 'shell' that surrounds them and isolates them tightly from the rest of the team. If they are criticized by the other individuals for lack of participation, communication or interaction, their philosophy is invariably the same: "I listen without interfering".

Although they perceive active participation as extremely tiring, it is advisable and much more constructive than remaining passive. "The 'shell' of these people prevents any outside influence from manifesting itself and at the same time prevents any externalization of their own ideas. People in this category expend considerable effort to maintain this closed system, due to the considerable pressure exerted on their own behavior by group norms.
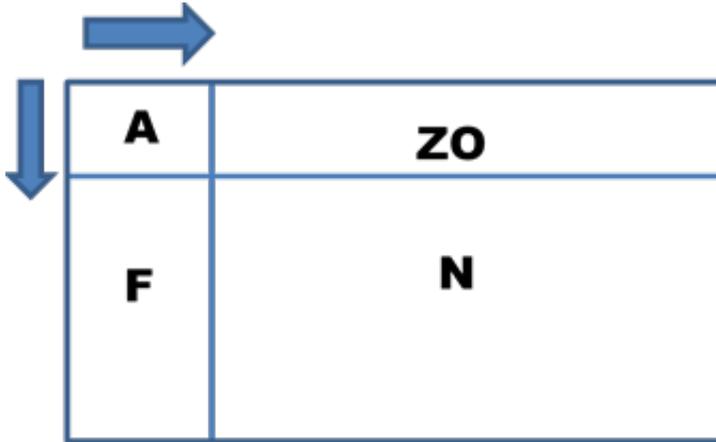
Figure 5.6. *Participant type Secret*

In conclusion, we can state that the objectives and purposes of soliciting and providing feedback and self-disclosure is to move the information from the "Blind Zone" and "Façade" boards to the "Arena" area, where anyone can access it.

The process of giving and asking for feedback also shifts information from the 'Unknown' to the 'Arena'. Giving non-threatening, constructive feedback takes practice. We need to develop a sense of openness to the needs of others, and we need to be able to "see through their eyes". For the feedback we give to become valuable to others, we need to show acceptance in our dealings with group members and with ourselves.

Also, in conclusion, the Johari Window model can be a very good tool for communication and integration in a team. The bigger the "Arena" is, the more intense the exchanges (of ideas, affections, information...) between team members. It is also a very good indicator of your personal brand – to what extent is what others know about you that you would like to communicate to them?

On the other hand, the "Johari Window" model is a simple and useful tool to improve our self-awareness and facilitate mutual understanding between individuals, within a group, teams or networks. This method can also be used to assess and improve a group's relationship with other groups and is a technique often used in corporations or various organizations. This model is interesting because it provides insight into what we think about ourselves and what others think about us.

Last but not least, from the perspective of human relations and work psychology, the "Johari Window" model offers a straightforward yet effective approach to compare what we communicate and convey about ourselves with what others perceive about us. It invites a particular method of personal self-reflection and development involving the following steps:

1. **In the first stage,** you need to build or strengthen "trust" with the other team members by presenting information about yourself (Self and Others);
2. **In stage 2,** with the help of feedback from others, you can learn about yourself and clarify aspects of your personal behavior or attitude.

5.3. Team dysfunction model

In his work on teamwork, Patrick Lencioni (Lencioni, 2010) proposes a model of team building and development based on the analysis and highlighting of 5 dysfunctions that occur in the team, dysfunctions that must be overcome by the team.

Essentially, the model proposed by Patrick Lencioni states that any team that wants to be successful must overcome 5 pitfalls (or challenges), pitfalls that basically refer to 5 dysfunctions of teamwork. The 5 dysfunctions are interrelated issues, each of these dysfunctions having a lethal level for team success. The 5 dysfunctions concern the following issues (Lencioni, 2010) :

1. **Lack of trust among team members**. Essentially, Patrick Lencioni's model states that trust among team members, in some way, is the basic element that gives the team vitality and strength. In general, trust among team members in each other refers to the five dysfunctions of teamwork. In some ways, trust is the basic element that gives the team vitality and strength. In general, team members' trust in each other refers to the fact that the intentions of team members are good and that there are no reasons for self-defense (reasons for threat or discomfort). Trust often implies a high level of openness among team members as well as a high level of communication. Also, one of the factors contributing to the 'absence of trust' may be the rejection of the idea of being vulnerable in the team. In this sense, members of a team who do not recognize and are not open with each other about their mistakes and weaknesses will never be able to build

a high level of trust. Last but not least, lack of trust in the medium term creates suspicion in the team, which is lethal for the success or even the very existence of the team. Once suspicion is established, the likelihood of destructive conflict and aggressive behavior is high. As a result, lack of trust leads to the rejection of any initiative from team members, creating a climate of suspicion, threat and fear of any team member. Below are some characteristics of trusting and non-trusting teams (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. *Characteristics of teams in terms of how trust is expressed*

Teams showing a lack of trust	Teams showing confidence
They hide their weaknesses and mistakes from each other	They recognize their weaknesses and mistakes
They hesitate to ask for help or give constructive feedback	Asking for help and accepting help
Avoid giving help in front of their own area of responsibility	Accept questions and opinions from others
They jump to conclusions about the intentions and abilities of others without trying to categorize them	They give each other innocence clauses
They waste time and energy trying to impress and dominate	They take risks and help themselves in activities
They do not recognize and do not want to use the experience and skills of others	Offers and accepts apologies without hesitation, accepts and draws on the experience and skills of others
They are suspicious of others and generally feel threatened and uncomfortable.	They are open with others and show a high degree of cooperation and communication

(Adapted: (Lencioni, 2010, pp. 184-185)

2. **Fear of conflict/avoid conflict**. Constructive conflict is the 2nd condition for team success. When conflicts arise that are limited to discussion and exchange of ideas, the team benefits. Of course, conflicts can be caused by frustration, passion, ego or emotion. In this case conflicts are certainly destructive. In general, teams that engage, dispassionately, in conflicts over the exchange of ideas are, after all, aiming to generate or produce the best

solution. In most cases, conflicts that are based on discussion and exchange of ideas resolve existing problems and situations much better and faster. If team members do not have the courage and willingness to openly discuss issues, or the courage and willingness to openly disagree with certain ideas or proposals, they are simply engaging in sterile discussions or personal attacks. In many ways, constructive conflict is about finding the best and most effective solution or course of action and is not an opportunity to 'flaunt' your specialist ego (showing off how great a specialist you are) or a basis for 'dominating' others. Below are some characteristics of teams that do and do not avoid conflicts of ideas (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. *Team characteristics in terms of avoiding conflicts of ideas*

Teams afraid of conflict	Teams are not afraid of conflict
Hold boring meetings or attack the person	I hold active, constructive and interesting meetings
Creates conditions for intrigues and personal attacks	Extracts and explores and accepts the ideas and opinions of all team members
Ignore controversial topics that are vital to team success	Solve the issues quickly and efficiently
Does not address all team members' opinions and perspectives	Minimize backroom politics and the appearance of intrigue
I waste time and energy with position and interpersonal interest management	Focus on vital topics

(Adaptation: Patrick Lencioni, 2010, p.191)

3. **Lack of commitment and involvement.** Lack of commitment can translate, among team members, as a state of "not caring" and "passivity" in relation to the activities and problems the team has to solve. It is, in some ways, much easier to stand aside and let others get involved. Obviously, there are many reasons why a team member may not be involved in teamwork. While some factors leading to non-involvement relate to distrust of team members or a desire not to get involved in conflicts, other factors relate to a desire for consensus and a desire not to make mistakes. Below are some of the characteristics of teams that avoid or do not engage (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. *Team characteristics in terms of avoiding conflicts of ideas*

Teams that don't commit	Teams making commitments
Creates ambiguity among team members about direction and priorities	Create clarity on direction and priorities
Avoid and do not understand the opportunities that may arise	Align the whole team around common goals
Lack of confidence and fear of failure are cultivated and encouraged	Develops the ability to learn from mistakes
It always revisits discussions and decisions	Always seize and identify opportunities
Encourages reconsideration of opinions by team members	Change direction without hesitation or guilt feelings

(Adaptation: Patrick Lencioni, 2010, p.195)

4. **Avoiding responsibility.** There are 2 aspects related to avoiding responsibility. First, avoiding responsibility means avoiding taking certain risks, risks that are inherent or cannot be avoided. Secondly, avoiding responsibility means not wanting to be held accountable for your actions and decisions, i.e. not assuming certain consequences and criticisms arising from your decisions and actions. On the other hand, taking responsibility means choosing a course of action that involves facing dangers and barriers. Often, team members get involved, take action but do not want to be held accountable. In general, the key to success for a team is that all team members take responsibility. Obviously, this means that from the outset team members need to be involved. In fact, involvement and taking responsibility go 'hand in hand'. Below are some characteristics of teams that avoid or fail to take responsibility (Table 5.4).

5. **Ignorance and inattention to results**. One of the greatest dangers a team can face is the tendency of team members to focus on anything other than achieving collective goals and objectives. From this point of view, a permanent focus on certain clearly defined objectives and results is the ultimate condition and requirement for any successful team. From some points of view, the reason why many teams fail to be results-oriented is the team's orientation and preoccupation with team status or the individual status of team members. In this sense, once a certain social, economic or political status is achieved

in the team, a phenomenon of complacency among team members may emerge, which in turn will lead to a phenomenon of 'stuckness', 'numbness' or 'giving up' on future aspirations and goals to be achieved. This phenomenon of self-sufficiency and mental complacency that arises with the achievement of a state basically leads to total ignorance of goals and outcomes. Below are some characteristics of teams that do and do not ignore results (Table 5.5).

Table 5.4. *Team characteristics in terms of avoiding conflicts of ideas*

Teams shirking responsibility	Teams taking responsibility
Create resentment among team members with different standards and performance	I make it so that poor performers feel the need to improve their performance
Encourages mediocrity	Identify potential problems quickly, questioning each other's approaches without hesitation
Missed deadlines (deadlines)	Establish respect among team members held to the same standards
No one wants to be held accountable for a particular decision or action by promoting bluster and non-involvement	Avoid excessive bureaucracy linked to performance management and corrective action
Placing an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline	

(Adaptation: Patrick Lencioni, 2010, p.195)

Table 5.5. Team characteristics in terms of the level of ignoring results

Teams not focused on results	Result-focused teams
The team is stagnating and not performing	Keep their employee's achievement-oriented
Rarely beats the competition	It discourages individualistic behavior and orientation towards solving individual interests
A dull working atmosphere that does not promote interest in work tasks	Encourages work and activity planning, involvement and accountability
They are losing their active, results-oriented and proactive employees	They have high productivity and work efficiency; motivation is also high
Encourages team members to focus on solving and promoting their own and individual interests	It ensures a working climate where everyone knows what they have to do and what the objectives are

(Adaptation: Patrick Lencioni, 2010, p.204)

On the other hand, we believe that for a team to be successful, the following cumulative conditions must be met:

1. Within the team the evaluation should be carried out according to the team's productive results. Evaluating the team in terms of productive outputs involves highlighting and analyzing the extent or degree to which the team's outputs and outcomes (in terms of decisions, products or services) meet or exceed or meet customer requirements and needs in terms of quality, reliability, quantity and timeliness.

2. Within the team there should be major concerns about team member satisfaction. In general, effective and successful teams provide opportunities for team members to have their individual needs met and to develop their personality and professionalism. In this sense, one of the great challenges and dilemmas of the team leader is to try to bring the team to the stage or level where each team member will feel satisfied, secure and professionally fulfilled.

3. There are mechanisms and processes in place within the team that lead to the development or enhancement of adaptability and learning. In general, successful teams have a high degree of adaptation and learning. One way of developing resilience is to adopt a process of learning from one's own mistakes or experience. Interestingly, teams that work together for a long time are highly adaptive. This is explained by the fact that the experience gained by team members, due to the long period of teamwork, gives them the ability to anticipate the actions and decisions of their teammates, so that each team member will behave appropriately and respond positively to the actions of his teammate(s). This is, for example, very noticeable in sports where a team plays together for a long time. In this case, each member of the team will learn to anticipate the movements and actions of each individual teammate and adapt their playing behavior and interaction to the behavior and playing strategy of their teammates.

6. TEAM LEARNING

6.1. The concept of team learning

Team learning is essential in modern work environments where the complexity of tasks requires a collective approach and diversity of perspectives. In some respects, some of the research related to team effectiveness and teamwork (Cohen & Ledford, The effectiveness of self-managing teams: A quasi-experiment, 1994) emphasizes that team effectiveness is influenced by team structural characteristics such as: how the tasks performed by team members are conceived and structured (designed), the diversity of the team in terms of competencies, skills and specialized (technical) knowledge, the availability of and access to resources and information (equipment, raw materials, online environment), the reward and pay system, the level of freedom given to team members (Hackman, 1987). In contrast, studies related to organizational learning also highlight that various cognitive and interpersonal factors facilitate the level of team effectiveness (e.g.: individuals' tacit beliefs about interpersonal interaction inhibit learning behaviors, ultimately leading to reduced effectiveness in organizations (Argyris, 1983) .

From some points of view, we can consider that it is not individual learning, but team learning that is the real driver in creating a strong team, without underestimating the role of individual learning. Through dialogue between team members, joint analysis of complex problem-solving, collective participation in innovative actions and activities, collaboration, and open communication between team members and with members of other teams within the organization, teams can be seen as a potential basis for continuous organizational growth and change. Work teams are groups that generally act and exist within the context of an organization (a larger and more complex structure) and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In general, team learning (learning behavior) can be defined as the effort to collaborate and work together to achieve a common goal within the group. The aim of team learning is to achieve the common goal through dialogue

and discussion, or through conflict and certain influencing techniques practiced within the group.

Team learning, on the other hand, from a broader perspective, consists of activities carried out by team members through which the team obtains and analyzes and processes data (information) that enables it to adapt and improve its work. Examples of team learning behaviors may include: (1) seeking feedback; (2) exchanging information; (3) asking for help and discussing the occurrence of various errors and how to correct them.

Why is this topic of team learning so important for the team?

First of all, learning in any team plays an important and necessary role in developing the knowledge and skills of the team members (to better adapt and cope with new and unexpected situations). On the other hand, both the team and the organization itself benefit when the ideas and opinions of different individuals are taken into consideration and accepted, and last but not least, it helps to better understand the individuals in the team and to focus on working together (the process of learning to work together with other individuals).

Through the learning process, teams (team members) can identify, detect, and analyze changes in the internal or external environment, and can act together more effectively (e.g., new customer requirements are identified by a team member who then disseminates them to teammates – in order to understand and act collectively, thereby better coping with the new situation).

As a succinct picture, learning for a team has the following advantages:

1. Increased team performance: by sharing knowledge and skills, the team becomes more efficient and productive. Virtually all complex problems are solved faster and more creatively as each member contributes unique perspectives and experiences.
2. Development of individual (professional and personal) skills: each team member has the opportunity to learn from his or her colleagues, thus developing his or her own (professional and individual) competences and skills. Team learning thus stimulates personal and professional growth.
3. Improved communication and collaboration: in general, team learning requires a level of open communication and mutual respect, which strengthens relationships between members. In this way, collaboration becomes more fluid, and conflicts are managed more effectively.

4. Adaptability and innovation: through the learning process, members of learning teams are more flexible and open to new and change, being able to brainstorm ideas and approaches stimulates innovation and finding better solutions.

5. Increased commitment and motivation: when team members feel valued and involved in the learning process, their level of commitment and motivation increases. Moreover, a positive learning environment contributes to job satisfaction and reduces burnout.

6. Attract and retain talent: teams that promote team learning become more attractive to talented professionals seeking development opportunities. This increases employee retention as they feel engaged and supported in their careers.

7. Superior results and achievement of objectives: team learning leads to better coordination and alignment of efforts, which maximizes the chances of achieving common goals. In this way, teams where team members learn together are more effective in managing resources and time.

Related to the team learning process, a number of problems arise, in general, problems related to non-dissemination of information and not informing group members in discussions and group meetings (not wanting to share the unique knowledge that only they possess), and which alter the learning process and behavior of team members. In this sense, there may be situations where even team members in a position to initiate a learning behavior do not do so, because they may think of themselves as putting themselves in a position of inferiority to the rest of the team members, i.e. not to "appear weak and incompetent in the eyes of the team" and not least because of their exaggerated egos about their own image and self-esteem (e.g. by admitting a mistake or asking for help).

On the other hand, the main issues related to team learning can be summarized as follows:

1. *Differences in level of involvement and motivation*: some team members may be more involved than others, which can lead to an imbalance in the overall level of motivation and engagement.

2. *Communication difficulties:* team members may have different communication styles, which makes it difficult to work together, leading to

misunderstandings and conflicts. On the other hand, some team members may dominate discussions while others may feel marginalized.

3. ***Decision-making problems:*** team members may have difficulty reaching agreement when there are divergent opinions.

4. ***Unequal distribution of tasks:*** sometimes tasks are not shared equally, and some team members end up putting in more effort than others.

5. ***Level of conflicts and tensions between team members***: obviously in any team there can be differences of opinion, differences that can generate tensions and conflicts that, if not managed correctly, can affect the team dynamics. Attention should be paid to personal issues between team members, which often have a negative influence on collaboration.

6. ***Lack of effective leadership:*** if the team does not have a clear leader, or if the team leader does not manage the group well, the learning process may be lacking or become chaotic. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership may discourage active participation of team members.

Team learning appears in literature in 2 main ways, namely (Edmondson A. , 1999) :

1. **Team learning – as a process**. According to this approach, learning appears as a process through which one tries to generate the behaviors that detect and correct errors, a form of adaptation to new circumstances and change, and a better understanding of how to enhance team performance. In this view, team learning behavior is a continuous process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback and help, experimenting and testing, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or possible unexpected outcomes of actions. Also, for a team to discover errors and mistakes in the activities they carry out, they need to test hypotheses and openly and formally discuss any differences of opinion that may arise. In general, team learning behavior takes several forms, namely: (1) seeking and asking questions; (2) generating and validating hypotheses and assumptions; (3) evaluating alternatives; (4) seeking feedback from team members; (5) seeking to test and experiment; (6) discussing and correcting errors; (7) reflective communication.

2. **Team learning – as an outcome**. From this perspective, team learning behavior is seen rather as an outcome, i.e. described in terms of changes in

knowledge, skills and attitudes resulting from interactions between team members.

Last but not least, a number of studies (Bunderson & Sutcliffe, Management team learning orientation and business unit performance, 2003) suggest that while a team learning orientation can encourage adaptive behaviors that lead to improved performance, it is also possible for teams to compromise short-term performance by overemphasizing learning. especially when they have performed well.

In conclusion, paradoxical as it may seem, team learning is not just a process of knowledge accumulation, but a mechanism that enhances cohesion, performance and innovation. It transforms a team into a dynamic and sustainable environment, where every member contributes to collective success and benefits from opportunities for growth. In an ever-changing world, the ability to learn together becomes a key competitive advantage.

6.2. Team learning models

Over time, the concern for team learning has materialized through the emergence of different theoretical models (framework) that try to explain how team learning takes place, respectively the factors that generate or influence this process.

6.2.1. Work team learning model (Edmondson's model)

This model was developed by Edmondson (Edmondson A. , 1999) on different work teams (from various fields of activity) and is based on the study of team learning behaviors. According to the model, on the one hand, team learning behavior is positively (and significantly) correlated with team performance. On the other hand, beliefs/beliefs of team members (operationalized in terms of 2 variables psychological safety and team efficacy) significantly predicted team learning behavior (Fig. 6.1.).

According to the model, team effectiveness can be developed by improving team structural features such as: a clearly defined team objective, a good role design of team members, better support (facilitating access to appropriate resources and information), helpful and supportive behaviors from the team leader (offering

emotional and expert support, encouraging task derogation, involvement in decision making, better information to team members).

Figure 6.1. *Edmondson's model of team learning behavior*
(Adapted from (Edmondson A. , 1999)

The model highlights three key dimensions of team learning:

1. *Learning behaviors:* specific interactions that contribute to team development and adaptation, such as: (1) sharing information; (2) soliciting feedback; (3) experimenting and testing new ideas; (4) reflecting on previous experiences.

2. *Supportive factors:* conditions that facilitate learning, such as:
   a. Team psychological safety – team members must feel safe to express their ideas without fear of ridicule or punishment.
   b. Structure and clarity of roles – each member needs to know what is expected of them.
   c. Leadership support – leaders need to create a climate that is conducive to learning.

3. *Learning outcomes:* the consequences of the team learning process, such as: (1) the level of team effectiveness; (2) increased innovation and creativity; (3) improved overall organizational performance.

Psychological safety can be defined as shared beliefs where team members feel "safe" when willing to take interpersonal risks. It serves as the main criterion influencing the level of risk-taking. Essentially, the level of risk-taking is extremely low when individuals do not feel safe taking certain actions, as they fear negative consequences resulting from those actions. For the most part, these beliefs tend to occur tacitly and are not consciously considered by team members. Although tacit beliefs about interpersonal norms are sometimes explicitly discussed within the team, making them more evident, this does little to alter the essence of the team's psychological environment. When team members want to share an idea or opinion regarding improving the team's work or performance, they often do not express it directly or frequently due to the fear of harsh judgment from their

teammates. When psychological safety is present, team members think less about the potential negative consequences their opinions or ideas may incur. Consequently, they communicate more openly and frequently about risky actions, feeling psychologically safe and are motivated to propose alternative actions, many of which are riskier. According to the model, the psychological safety among team members should facilitate learning behaviors in work teams, as it alleviates excessive worry and fear of others' reactions, particularly to actions that may lead to negative consequences or damage one's

Team effectiveness can be defined as the perceived performance capability of the team. In this sense, some specialists define team effectiveness as the collective judgment of group members about the group's ability to accomplish a specific task (Gibson, 1999) . From said perspectives, team effectiveness is the group-level translation of the concept of "self-efficacy" (a concept defined as an individual's belief in his or her own abilities to succeed in specific situations or to accomplish a task). A person's perceived level of self-efficacy can play a major role in how they act, approach goals, tasks and allow themselves to be challenged by actions. Therefore, team psychological safety and team efficacy are complementary beliefs, one related to an interpersonal threat and the other related to a characteristic (capability) of a team's potential that have an effect on team learning.

Edmondson's model emphasizes that team learning is not automatic but must be supported by an organizational culture that encourages open communication, feedback and collaboration. As an example of applying the model: in a hospital, if doctors and nurses do not feel safe to report mistakes or ask questions, there is a risk of serious errors. By creating a climate of psychological safety and promoting active learning behavior, teams can improve both performance and patient safety.

6.2.2. Continuous group learning model (Sessa and London model)

The authors Sessa and London (Sessa & London, 2006) define group learning as "the group's deepened and diverse capabilities in (re)structuring how to act to cope with changing conditions, adding and using new skills, knowledge and attitudes, and becoming an increasingly successful group through feedback and reflection on its own actions and consequences". From the model's point of view, group learning is a dynamic system in which learning processes, the conditions that support them, the individuals in the group, and the "behavior" of the group

change as the team begins to learn. On the other hand, the continuous group learning model (Figure 6.2.) describes the elements of group learning and their relationships.
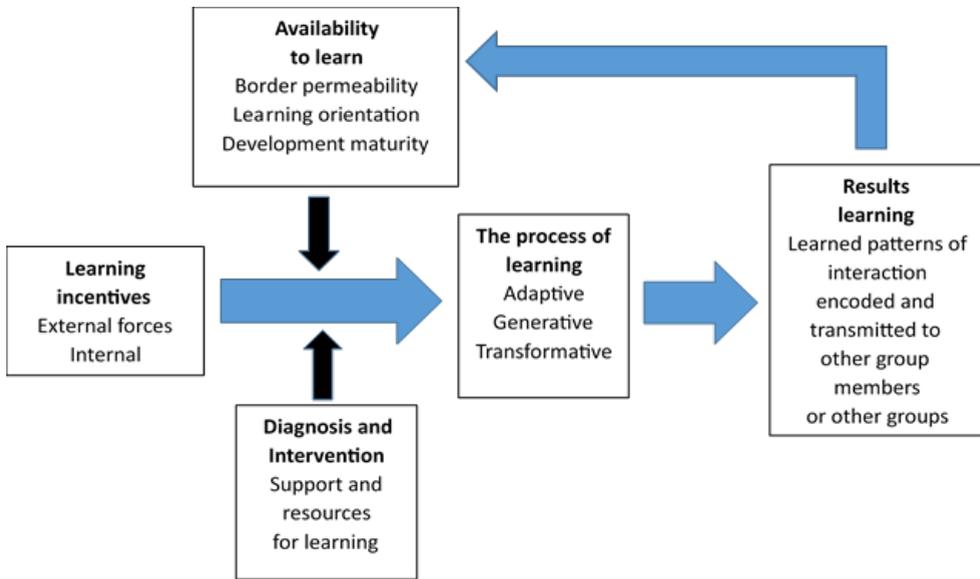
Figure. 6.2. *Continuous group learning model*
(Adapted from (Sessa & London, 2006)

According to the model, the two antecedents that influence the learning process are, in general, learning incentives and readiness.

1. Learning stimuli (or triggers) are pressures, demands, challenges, opportunities that arise internally from group leaders or members or externally from the environment. Learning stimuli, on the other hand, are the factors that trigger learning in a team. These stimuli occur in various forms and motivate the group to reflect, experiment and improve their performance. The stimuli affect the group's activity so that the group cannot continue to function in the same way and be successful. However, the willingness to learn determines the intensity of the stimuli as well as the response to the stimuli. The category of learning stimuli includes:

1.1. Internal stimuli (within the team/organization):
- Team performance – if the team notices poor results, it may decide to analyze what needs to change.
- Mistakes and failures – when the team encounters difficulties or makes mistakes, this becomes a learning opportunity.

- Internal reflection and feedback – the team can regularly discuss performance and possible improvements.
- New goals and challenges – when new tasks or projects arise, the team needs to learn new strategies to succeed.

1.2. External stimuli (outside the team/organization):

- Customer demands and expectations – feedback received from customers can lead the team to adjust their working methods.
- Changes in market or technology – the emergence of new technologies or practices forces the team to learn and adapt.
- Competition – observing the success of other organizations can motivate the team to improve their working methods.
- Changes in legislation or organizational policies – teams need to learn and adapt to new regulations.

2. Willingness to learn, according to the authors of the model, is the degree to which the group recognizes that it needs to change (i.e., that something needs to change in order to enhance performance), acknowledging the necessity to decide upon an appropriate course of action. In other words, the willingness to learn is the team's attitude and capacity to accept and leverage learning opportunities. It directly impacts how the team responds to learning stimuli and how it improves its overall performance. Readiness, as a mode of operationalization, is a function of three factors: (1) the maturity of a group, (2) the permeability of the boundary, and (3) it is learning orientation. Thus:

- *Group maturity:* refers to the level of development of the team in terms of cohesion and communication and autonomy. Obviously mature teams have stable relationships, well-defined roles and a culture of collaboration, which makes them more open to learning. Immature teams, on the other hand, may have difficulties in managing conflict, taking responsibility and collaborating, which can reduce their willingness to learn.
- *Boundary permeability:* refers to how open or closed the team is to external influences (other teams, the organization, the external environment). A team with a high permeable boundary will allow the team to receive external feedback, ideas and resources, which stimulate learning. Conversely, a rigid boundary isolates the team, which can limit exposure to new perspectives and slow down the learning process.

– ***Learning orientation***: refers to the team's attitude towards the learning process, i.e. whether members consider continuous development important. Teams with a strong learning orientation see challenges as opportunities and are more open to change. In contrast, teams focused solely on results may avoid learning as a waste of time.

Note that group members will be more likely to learn when there is appropriate 'boundary permeability' of the group (allowing for some interaction of the group with the environment – e.g. ease with which people and resources move in and out of the group). Accordingly, the group boundary must be sufficiently permeable so that the group can access the various resources they need (including new members), but on the other hand does not allow entry from outside of the group of individuals that overwhelm the group or the outflow of resources to other groups (Alderfer, 1980) .

Groups, by nature of their different location, due to the diversity of group members, differ greatly in terms of their learning orientation (proactive learning orientation), i.e. they have a different general learning inclination (Bunderson & Sutcliffe, Management team learning orientation and business unit performance, 2003). In this sense, there are groups that have a greater 'learning orientation' and are more ready to learn, seek opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge and devote time to learning, enjoy and take on challenging tasks from which to learn and are willing to test new ideas. At the opposite pole are groups with extremely low levels of proactive learning.

The outcomes of the group learning process are the patterns (types) of learning that take the form of adaptive, generative and/or transformative learning (patterns that thus become part of the group's common mental model).

(1) **Adaptive learning –** occurs when the group makes spontaneous changes in the way members interact and, in the work, they respond to environmental demands, pressures or requests. Adaptive learning involves learning differently adapted to each situation or context experienced.

(2) **Generative learning –** is proactively learning and applying new skills, knowledge and information, sharing these with other group members and as a group, using these skills, knowledge and information to change the goals and tasks of the group. It is a motivating factor and is often regulated by the group itself. Generative learning involves the creation and continuous exploration of new

opportunities and new pathways and is potential for development and increased group performance.

(3) **Transformational learning –** occurs when team structure, tasks or goals are significantly changed to cope with external pressure, respond to opportunities or find new team directions. Team members critically reflect on personal experience to modify their own beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions – learning that transforms the inner individual. Consequently, it can be argued that transformative learning not only transforms and alters perceptions but also changes the team's responsibilities and role relationships and results in a deeper sense of understanding (Kegan, 2000) . Transformative learning can be seen as recreating the group in more fundamental ways. Therefore, continuous group learning is a function of incentives and preparation to learn (Sessa & London, 2006) . In continuous learning, the group learns adaptive, generative, and/or transformative patterns of interaction. If the group is successful, it will continue to use these adaptive, generative interaction patterns in the future, whenever the group encounters a new activity or event.

Link to Edmondson's Model and Sessa & London's Model:

– Edmondson's Model (Team Learning) → Psychological safety influences learning beliefs and behaviors.
– Sessa & London's model (Continuous Group Learning) → Factors such as team maturity and boundary permeability affect learning beliefs and behaviors.

6.2.3. Modeling team learning beliefs and behaviors

This model is a model based on collaborative learning (as a social process of knowledge construction) combined with aspects of the social climate in which learning takes place. Practically, this model emphasizes the influence that beliefs and behaviors have on team effectiveness. The beliefs and behaviors model of team learning explains how a team's collective beliefs influence members' actions in the learning process. This model emphasizes that before a team can adopt learning behaviors, they must have shared beliefs about the importance of learning.

In the model's view, collaboration, as a concept, is defined as a process of building and maintaining a common understanding of a problem or task, sharing responsibility among group members, exchanging expertise, and building and negotiating knowledge (cognitions) with each other. Moreover, team members by sharing knowledge with each other realize *a mutually shared cognition*,

which is called "team learning behavior". In this sense, a number of specialists (Bossche, 2006) consider 'negotiation' to be the key element in determining which interaction and discourse patterns are forms of team learning behavior.

According to the model "beliefs about team learning" shared by team members will influence "team learning behaviors". Thus, as components of the model we have:

1. **Team learning beliefs:** which represent the team's beliefs and attitudes towards the learning process. These beliefs influence the degree of engagement in learning and innovation activities. *As* examples of positive beliefs: (1) "Learning is essential to our success"*; (2)* "Mistakes are opportunities to learn"*; (3)* "Feedback is valuable and helps us grow".

   Examples of negative beliefs are the following: (1) "Learning slows us down and distracts us from our goals"; (2) "Admitting mistakes is a sign of weakness"; (3) "Only leaders have to learn, the others just have to execute".

2. **Team learning behaviors:** the concrete actions the team takes to learn and grow. These behaviors are influenced by team beliefs. As examples of learning behaviors: (1) sharing ideas and knowledge among members; (2) soliciting and giving feedback; (3) experimenting and testing new strategies; (4) reflecting on experiences and continuous improvement. At the opposite pole as examples of behaviors that block learning are: (1) avoiding discussing mistakes; (2) lack of collaboration between members; (3) refusing or ignoring feedback.

Two team learning processes are of crucial importance: (1) the construction and co-construction of meaning and (2) constructive conflict leading to agreement:

a. **Constructing meaning** is the process of articulating and promoting personal meaning embedded in a particular social context or framework (Stahl, 2000), starting with a team member identifying a problem, suggesting possible solutions, sharing ideas with teammates, and finally, embodying meaning. Team members respond by trying to solve the problem, matching ideas and providing feedback. This process can lead to co-construction (or collaborative construction), modifying and altering the original meaning or meaning through suggestions, discussion, and mutual cooperation (Webb & Palincsar, 1996) .

b. **Constructive conflict**: it refers to the fact that team members might not always agree on how to solve problems, having their own interpretation of the situation and obviously their own solutions. This can sometimes lead

to working out a solution by negotiating different opinions. Sometimes, these differences of opinions, being too large and diverse, cannot always guarantee a positive negotiation (a positive outcome) because these differences may be seen as personal emotional rejection instead of simple differences in understanding of the problem, and thus the phenomenon of obstructing productive team behavior occurs (Dreu & Weingart, 2003) . Team benefits will only be achieved if differences of opinions (or meanings) are negotiated. Moreover, Van den Bossche (Bossche, 2006) summarizes constructive conflict as "negotiating differences in interpretation among team members through argument and clarification".

According to the model, interpersonal beliefs are based on the learning behavior of the team and can lead to mutually shared knowledge, which leads to increased team effectiveness.
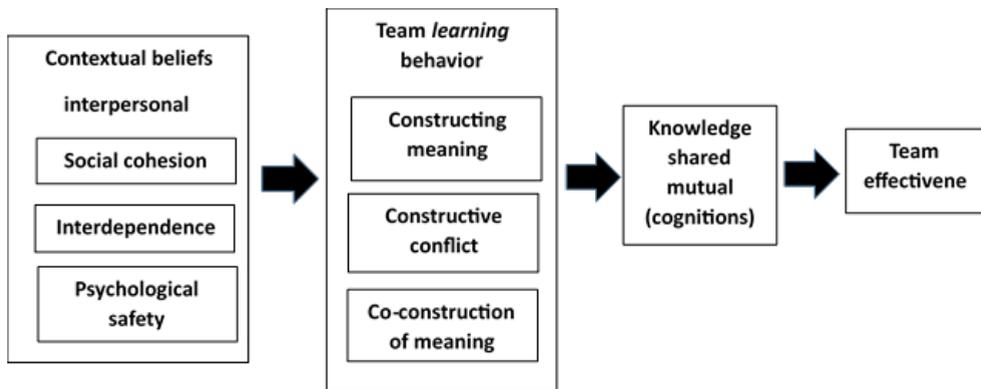
Figure 6.3. *Model of team learning beliefs and behaviors*

Beliefs about the interpersonal context include psychological safety (interpersonal risk-taking safety), interdependence (perceived task interdependence in the team), cohesion (social cohesion and task cohesion) and group potency.

Therefore, the model considers that perceived team effectiveness/efficacy is significantly influenced by team learning behavior and that mutually shared cognition (knowledge) acts as a mediator between team learning behavior and team effectiveness. Mutually shared knowledge (cognition) can therefore be identified as a deep learning outcome. In this sense, team members will engage in social (cognitive) processes of team learning behavior either in a specific climate or under

specific circumstances (i.e. interdependence, task cohesion, psychological safety). In other words:

- Team beliefs and behaviors are key to successful learning.
- Without a positive learning culture, teams will avoid change and improvement.
- To foster learning, leaders need to create an environment that encourages positive beliefs and constructive behaviors.

Example

In a healthcare environment, continuous learning is essential to improve services, reduce errors and increase the quality of patient care. Team learning beliefs and behaviors directly influence how healthcare professionals collaborate, learn from experiences and adopt new practices.

1. Beliefs regarding Learning in a Medical Team: <u>team-related we can have:</u>
- ✓ *Positive Beliefs (encourages learning):*
  – "Continuous learning helps us save lives and improve patient care."
  – "Mistakes must be openly analyzed to prevent them from happening again."
  – "Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for making the best decisions."
  – "Feedback helps us become better professionals."

- ✓ *Negative beliefs (blocks learning):*
  – "If I admit a mistake, I will be judged by colleagues and punished."
  – "Experience is more important than learning from books or courses."
  – "We don't have time for training or reflection sessions."
  – "Medicine is rigid, we shouldn't experiment with new methods."

Thus, related to learning beliefs, if the team has positive beliefs about learning, it will be more open to change and improve practices. If, on the other hand, negative beliefs predominate, the team will avoid taking risks, learning from mistakes and collaboration.

2. Learning Behaviors in a Medical Team: <u>related to the team we can have:</u>
- ✓ *Positive learning behaviors:*
  – Medical staff actively participate in trainings and conferences.
  – Reflection sessions are organized after difficult cases to learn important lessons.
  – Doctors and nurses share their experiences and collaborate interdisciplinary.

– Encourage constructive peer feedback without fear of judgment.
– Adopt a culture of reporting mistakes so that the whole team learns from them.

✓ *Behaviors that block learning:*
   – People avoid training as a waste of time.
   – Mistakes are hidden for fear of sanctions, and the team does not learn from them.
   – Experienced doctors refuse to learn from younger colleagues or from other specialties.
   – Decisions are taken hierarchically, without involving the whole team in the learning process.
   – Feedback is perceived as personal criticism, not an opportunity for growth.

3. **Link between Beliefs and Behaviors "*The team's beliefs influence its behaviors*":**
   SCENARIO 1: Positive Beliefs Medical Team
   Belief: "Feedback helps us grow professionally."
   Behavior: Doctors and nurses openly discuss difficult cases and seek better solutions.
   Result: The team becomes better performing and better prepared.
   SCENARIO 2: Medical Team with Negative Beliefs
   Belief: "Admitting a mistake leads to penalties."
   Behavior: Staff hide errors and do not discuss problems.
   Result: The same mistakes are repeated, affecting patient safety.

4. **How to Improve Learning in a Medical Team?**
   a. **Changing negative beliefs**
      – Create a psychologically safe environment where team members feel free to express their ideas and admit mistakes.
      – Promoting the idea that learning is not just for beginners, but a lifelong process.
      – Encouraging exchange of experience between young and experienced doctors.
   b. **Improving learning behaviors**
      – Organize regular reflection sessions on medical cases.
      – Create a constructive feedback system without fear of penalties.

– Implement mentoring programs for lifelong learning.
– Promote participation in courses, workshops and conferences.

Conclusion

1. The medical team's beliefs about learning determine their behaviors and, therefore, the quality of patient care.
2. Teams that adopt a positive learning culture become more efficient, innovative and able to avoid medical errors.
3. Psychological safety and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential to foster continuous learning in a medical team.

7. DECISION-MAKING IN WORK TEAMS

7.1. Conceptual definitions related to decision-making in a team

One of the problems faced by leaders of work teams (Lazăr, Mortan, Vereş, & Lazăr, 2004) is related to the decision-making process. The leadership of a team is constantly confronted with the task of choosing from several possibilities and making decisions. Decisions are at the heart of team leadership. On the other hand, all leadership is a chain of decisions without which the team and the team members could not act. Any team-related failure depends, after all, on the decisions made by the team leader.

In general, team leaders' decisions, taken on a daily (operational) basis, concern organizational and control aspects, such as team structure, work process control systems, generation and allocation of resources, and solutions to problems that arise unexpectedly in the team. The decision-making process is not an easy thing. In many cases, the burden of decision making arises from the fact that the team leader either does not have sufficient information to make the decision or there are conflicts about how the decision should solve or resolve the problems in question.

Therefore, the decision-making process is a vital element for any team, being an essential aspect for any team leader, because the way in which decisions are taken further depends on how problems are solved and resolved within the team, how resources are allocated and/or how the proposed objectives and goals are achieved.

From a conceptual point of view, there are several definitions related to the concept of "decision", i.e. "the decision-making process". According to some authors, decisions are considered as a course of action consciously chosen by the management of an organization in order to reach a certain result. On the other hand, decisions represent a thought process generated by the need to solve a problem (or requirement/need), and which is preceded by thorough information

and analysis of all the facts of the problem. Last but not least, decisions can be defined as a choice of solution from a group of possible alternative solutions.

Therefore, we consider that decision is defined as "a thinking process, consciously carried out by leaders or managers, in order to choose a solution from a possible set of alternatives, preceded by an analysis of data and information, which generates a course of action in order to achieve objectives or solve a problem" (Lazăr, et. al., 2004).

Instead, decision-making can be defined as the process of identifying problems and choosing the optimal solution from a set of possible alternatives.

In general, the decision-making process involves the following elements:

– existence of a decision-maker (leader/head) – the person (or persons) entitled to make decisions.
– the objective(s) pursued by the decision (e.g. to solve a problem or meet a pressing need).
– the existence of an information system necessary for analyzing information and data on the problem or need.
– crowd of alternatives – the possible courses of action to achieve the objectives.

From a procedural point of view, team decision-making involves the following aspects (elements):

1. *Identifying the problem or opportunity*
   - Clearly define the situation: the team needs to understand exactly what problem needs to be solved or what opportunity needs to be explored.
   - Setting objectives: what results do you want to achieve by taking the decision?

2. *Collecting and analyzing information*
   - Data collection: the team should gather relevant information to help understand the problem.
   - Information analysis: Data should be analyzed to identify causes, effects and possible solutions.

3. *Generating or building options*
   - Brainstorming: Team members should generate as many ideas and solutions as possible.
   - Diversity of perspectives: It is important to consider the views of all team members.

4. *Assessment of options*
   - Evaluation criteria: Set clear criteria (e.g. cost, time, resources, impact) to evaluate each option.
   - Analysis of pros and cons: Each option should be analyzed in detail, considering its pros and cons.

5. *Taking the decision*
   - Consensus or vote: the decision can be taken by consensus (agreement of all members) or by vote.
   - Responsibility for the decision: It is important to establish who is responsible for implementing the decision.

6. *Monitoring and evaluation of results*
   - Tracking progress: Check progress regularly to ensure that the decision is being implemented as planned.

7. *Continuous learning and improvement*
   - Reflect on the process: After implementation, the team should reflect on the decision-making process to identify strengths and weaknesses.
   - Process improvement: Using lessons learned to improve decision-making in the future.

The decision-making process in a work team is influenced by a number of factors and elements that can affect the quality, speed and effectiveness of decisions. In order to improve this process, teams need to be aware of these factors and work to create a collaborative, transparent and results-oriented working environment. These factors can be internal (related to the team and the organization) or external (related to the external environment). Here is a detailed overview:

1. **Internal Factors (within the team or organization):**
   A. *Team dynamics:*
   - Communication: clear and open communication between team members is essential for effective decision-making.
   - Team cohesion: if the team is cohesive and works well together, decisions can be made faster and with less conflict.
   - Roles and responsibilities: the level of clarity in the distribution of roles and responsibilities influence how decisions are made and implemented.

- Team diversity: diverse teams (in terms of experience, skills, perspectives) can generate more creative ideas, but may take longer to reach consensus.

B. Leadership:

- Leadership style: an authoritarian leader can make decisions quickly, but may exclude team members' opinions, while a democratic leader may encourage everyone to participate, but may take longer.
- Level of trust in the leader: a high level of team trust in the leader, decisions will allow the team leader's decisions to be more easily accepted and implemented.
- Level of delegation of responsibilities: a team leader who knows how to effectively delegate tasks to subordinates can improve decision-making.

C. Organizational culture

- Level of transparency: an organizational culture that promotes a high level of transparency and openness will encourage the participation of all team members in the decision-making process.
- Level of flexibility: flexible teams allow team members to experiment and make innovative decisions.
- Risk tolerance level: if the organization is open to risk, the team can take bolder decisions.
- Level of psychological safety: a team that has a high level of psychological safety will enable a more efficient decision-making process.

D. Available resources

- Human resources: the level of skills and experience of team members has a major influence on the quality of decisions.
- Financial and material resources: the availability of different types of resources (financial and material) can limit or support the options available.
- Time pressure (deadline): time pressure can force the team to make quick but sometimes superficial decisions.

E. Organizational processes and structures

- Established procedures: some teams have formal decision-making procedures that can speed up or slow down the process.
- Hierarchy: hierarchical structuring, i.e. rigid hierarchical structures can hinder the participation of all team members.

2. External Factors (from the external environment)

A. External pressures

- Competition: competitive pressure can force teams to make quick and strategic decisions.
- Market: changes in customer or market requirements can influence the team's decisions.
- Legal regulations: laws and regulations may limit the options available.

B. Technology

- Availability of technology: access to new technologies can provide more options and tools for decision-making.
- Digitalization: digital processes can speed up data collection and analysis, facilitating data-driven decisions.

C. Social and cultural change

Social values and expectations: changes in social values (e.g. sustainability, diversity) can influence team decisions.

D. Economic factors

- Economic conditions: recession, inflation or economic growth can influence your team's financial decisions.
- Availability of funding: access to funding may affect the options available.

3. Individual Factors (related to team members)

A. Skills and experience

- Technical skills: members with strong technical skills can contribute to better informed decisions.
- Experience: previous decision-making experience can improve the process.

B. Personality and attitude

- Self-confidence: a high level of self-confidence among team members will contribute more actively to discussions.
- Tolerance for ambiguity: some team members may be more familiar or comfortable with making decisions under uncertainty.

C. Cognitive biases

- Confirmation bias: the tendency to seek information that confirms pre-existing opinions.

- Groupthink: the pressure to conform to majority opinions, even if they are wrong.
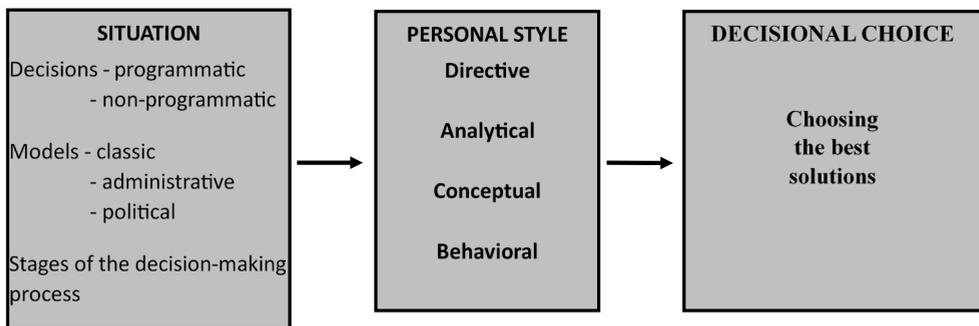
4. Other Important Factors

A. Complexity of the problem

Complex problems require more time and resources to analyze and solve.

B. Level of uncertainty

Decisions under uncertainty are more difficult and may require creative approaches.

On the other hand, one of the most important factors influencing the decision-making process is the personal decision-making style itself. In this respect, some studies have shown that not all managers (and therefore team leaders) make decisions in the same way, although they all follow similar decision patterns and stages. These differences can be explained by the fact that each manager has his or her own style of decision making. Individual decision-making style refers to the distinctions that emerge among decision-makers regarding 'how' they perceive problems and 'how' they make decisions.

SITUATION	PERSONAL STYLE	DECISIONAL CHOICE

Decisions - programmatic
    - non-programmatic
 	
Models - classic
    - administrative
    - political
 	
Stages of the decision-making process
	Directive
	
	Analytical
	
	Conceptual
	
	Behavioral
		Choosing the best solutions

Figure 7.1. *Personal (individual) decision-making model*
(Adapted from: Daft and Marcic, 2010, p.212)

The literature (Rowe and Mason, 1987), emphasizes 4 major decision-making styles, namely (Figure 7.1.):

1. **The directive decision-making style,** used by decision-makers who prefer straightforward (uncomplicated) solutions to problems that are simple, clear and well-defined. Managers who use these styles often make quick

decisions, i.e. they consider 1 or at most 2 alternatives in their analysis, because they do not like to spend a lot of time analyzing the multitude of information related to the problems. People who prefer the directive style of decision making are generally highly efficient and rational and prefer to rely on existing rules, norms and procedures.

2. **Analytical style** is used by managers who like to consider complex solutions to problems, based on a large amount of data and information gathered. These individuals are extremely cautious and careful when it comes to analyzing and choosing alternatives. Often, managers (team leaders) who prefer this style of decision making rely on rational and objective data from management control systems or performance measurement systems. They will always look for the best solution based on the available information.

3. **The conceptual style** considers the wealth of information available and is a style oriented towards conceptually analyzing aspects of problems in contrast to the analytical style Managers who prefer this style have a more social style of decision making, preferring to discuss with others how to solve problems and possible alternative solutions. This style tries to emphasize the causal and theoretical definition and explanation of the conceptual links relating to the problems that arise. Decision-makers, in this case, for decision making rely both on information provided by the system (rules or procedures) and by other people, and the solutions found are highly creative in character.

4. **The behavioral style** is the style adopted by managers who are most concerned about employees as individuals. This style involves the manager talking face to face with each individual, i.e. trying to understand and consider the interests, views and opinions of each individual involved and/or affected by the problem of decision-making.

This categorization is a subjective categorization, and decision-making styles can be categorized in other ways. For example, there are personal decision-making styles that are influenced by the neurotic level of the decision-maker. Also, individual decision-making styles can be influenced by the decision-maker's attitude towards involvement and ownership (When the decision-maker has a high adversarial attitude towards ownership he will have a much different personal decision-making style than a decision-maker who likes and wants to be involved).

Although many decision-makers have a dominant personal style of decision making, they often use different personal styles (or a combination of styles) in their day-to-day decision-making. For example: a manager may use a directive style to decide which firm will be in charge of printing new advertising materials and then turn to a conceptual or behavioral style to make decisions about defusing an interdepartmental conflict.

In fact, our recommendation is that team leaders or any other team-related decision-maker should adapt their personal decision-making styles to the demands and needs imposed by the real and concrete situations they face.

7.2. Decision-making models (used in teams)

In general, 3 models related to the decision-making process of managers are described in the literature. The use of a decision-making model depends on some factors such as: managers' personal preferences, whether the decision is a programmatic or non-programmatic decision, the level of decision conditions (certainty, uncertainty, risk or ambiguity). These 3 decisions making models are:

1. The classic decision-making model.
2. The administrative decision-making model.
3. The political decision-making model.

7.2.1. The classic decision-making model

This model is generally based on economic assumptions. Thus, this model assumes that the leader of a team makes decisions logically and rationally that will be in the economic benefit and interest of the team. In other words, team leaders make decisions that are going to maximize the economic interest or benefits of the team they lead. This model emphasizes 4 assumptions related to the decision-making process namely (Draft & Marcic, 2009) :

1. **The decision-maker** (person who makes decisions) has clearly defined objectives (or the problem to be solved) and how to achieve them. Problems are also precisely and clearly defined.
2. **The decision maker seeks and orients** towards conditions of certainty, by gathering and gathering as much but complete information as possible. The

alternatives and the expected results of each alternative are clearly analyzed and calculated.

3. **The criteria for evaluating** and choosing the alternatives are clearly defined and formulated. the decision-maker selects only the alternatives that maximize economic interest for the team.

4. **The decision-maker is rational** and uses logical models and analysis to order preferences, evaluate alternatives, maximize economic benefits.

The classical decision-making model is considered as a normative model of decision making because this model defines "how" team leaders (decision makers) should generate decisions. In contrast, this model does not describe 'how' decision makers (team leaders) actually make decisions. In reality almost all decisions made by team leaders are based on intuition or personal preferences. The value of this model lies in its ability to help team leaders or any other decision maker to be more rational. Moreover, from some perspectives, this model represents an "ideal" decision-making model and is often not used in the day-to-day work of team leaders. In general, the model has value and is suitable for programmatic decisions, i.e. decisions that are made under conditions of certainty or risk (where information is available, and the probability of an outcome can be calculated).

While the rational model provides a useful theoretical framework, it has some important limitations:

- Limited rationality: a number of scholars have argued that decision-makers are not perfectly rational due to cognitive limitations and lack of complete information (Simon H. , 1957) .

- Uncertainty and risk: In the real world, decision-makers often face uncertainty and risk, which makes it difficult to apply rational modeling (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) .

- Emotional and social factors: Emotions, social pressures and other non-rational factors can influence decision-making (March, 1994) .

Therefore, the rational decision-making model remains a valuable tool for understanding decision-making processes, but it needs to be complemented and analyzed through more realistic approaches, approaches that consider the complexity and uncertainty in real-world decision-making processes.

7.2.2. The administrative decision-making model

This model describes "how" decisions are made by managers in different real-life situations, i.e. nonprogrammatic decisions, or decisions under uncertainty and ambiguity. Many managers' decisions are not sufficiently programmatic due to lack of time or information, which leads to them not being able or willing to adopt the classical decision-making model even if they would like to.

The administrative decision-making model is based on two main concepts: (1) the concept of bounded rationality and (2) the concept of satisficing.

The concept of bounded rationality means that humans have limitations in the way they reason and understand things, aspects or phenomena. In other words, each of us can reason things and aspects up to a certain level (a certain limit of understanding). Obviously, the level or limit of reasoning depends on innate characteristics (intelligence, perceptiveness, agility, analytical mind, etc.) but also on the level of education.

The idea of this model is based on the fact that teams (like organizations) involve extremely varied and complex activities and issues, which means that team leaders do not have the time and skills to process all the information needed to make decisions. Only a certain amount of information can be processed by team leaders. Thus, due to the fact that they do not have the time nor the cognitive skills to fully process the information related to a complex decision, they will seek to satisfy the **minimum decision criteria**.

The satisficing process assumes that the decision-maker (team leader) will choose the first alternative solution that minimally satisfies the decision criteria. Rather than considering all alternatives to identify a solution that maximizes economic benefits and interests, team leaders will opt to identify the first solution that will seemingly minimally solve the problem, even though there may be a much better solution to solve the problem. In many situations, they cannot afford to spend the time and resources to fully obtain and process the information.

An example of a decision made using the administrative model is the example of the head of a work team on his way to an important business meeting. He accidentally spills coffee on his shirt in the car. In this case, he will go into the first clothes shop and has to buy the first shirt that minimally satisfies his desires (decisional criteria). As the (team) leader does not have time and opportunity to see other clothes shops or other types or models of shirts, because he is in a hurry

for the business meeting, he will limit his decisional decisions to the decisions that have to minimally satisfy his desires and that quickly and immediately solve the problem. In this case, certainly, for the replacement of the stained shirt the manager could buy another shirt that satisfies him much more (relative to the first shirt bought), but this required more time consumption.

The administrative decision-making model is a model that emphasizes the organizational factors that influence individual decisions. This model is a much more realistic model than the classical model and is used in much more complex and non-programmatic decisions. In this sense, the administrative decision-making model starts with the following assumptions:

1. **Decision objectives** are often vague, ambiguous and sources of conflict between team members.
2. **The rational** decision-making **process** is not always used in teams, being a process with a limited perspective: the perspective of analyzing and solving problems is simplistic that does not clearly and truly identify the complexity of organizational events and interactions.
3. **The analysis and choice of** alternatives by team leaders (decision makers) is limited and simplistic, due to various constraints related to individuals, resources or access to information (availability of all necessary information);
4. **Most team leaders** (decision makers) will seek through their decisions to satisfy their requirements and decision criteria rather than to maximize a solution. This is partly due to the limited accessibility of information. On the other hand, too few team leaders know what criteria may constitute a maximization of a solution.

The administrative model is a descriptive model, in the sense that this model describes "how" managers actually make decisions in complex situations and not "how" they should make decisions according to theoretical and logical (rational) criteria. Another feature of the model is that it sheds light on the human and organizational environmental limitations that affect the level or degree to which managers do not use rational decision-making processes.

Last but not least, another aspect highlighted by the use of the administrative model is intuition. Broadly speaking, intuition is a quick understanding of the decision situation, based on some past experience, consciously and logically/rationally disregarded (Simon H. , 1987) .

According to some authors (Chet & Duane, 2005), intuitive decision making is not something arbitrary and irrational, as it is based on years of practice and experience gained over time, which allows the manager (decision maker) to quickly identify solutions without a conscious analysis of the decision elements and factors. Moreover, these authors believe that due to the turbulence of the contemporary environment of work and action, intuitive decisions will play an important role. Their studies showed that almost half of the managers analyzed relied on intuitive decisions and not on a decision made following a rational decision-making process.

In relation to intuition, the specialist Klein (Klein G. , 2002) considers that intuition is linked to the process of recognition. In this sense, he believes that when one develops extensive knowledge and experience in a particular field, the right decisions arise quickly and without conscious rational effort as a result of "recognizing" and analyzing information that is apparently forgotten by the conscious level of the mind.

For example: a firefighter, based solely on his experience, makes intuitive decisions about his intervention on a fire by recognizing the type of fire. Similarly, in the business world, managers frequently receive and process information that they are unaware of its importance, being stored in an area of mental unconsciousness. However, after a while, when the situation calls for it, this information may surface and be unconsciously analyzed as intuition.

Although intuitive decisions play an important role in leading a work team, we believe that the choice of an intuitive decision-making process should be made with caution, in the sense that intuition should be used with care in certain conditions and circumstances and not considered a "magic wand" that generates the right decisions. In this sense, managers need to balance approaches to decision-making.

Thus, situations and conditions may arise in which team leaders (decision makers) can make arbitrary decisions without a careful rational analysis of the issues related to the problem (the intuitive decision-making model), but equally well, situations may arise in which the decision-making process must be based on a rational and logical analysis.

Therefore, we believe that both conscious and intuitive reasoning are important elements in the decision-making process.

7.2.3. The political decision-making model

This decision-making model is used by managers to make non-programmatic decisions under conditions of uncertainty and limited available information, and managers do not reach an understanding about the goals and objectives pursued by the decision and the course of action to be taken as a result of the decision.

Many decisions concerning organizational and planning aspects of activities involve several decision-makers, each of whom may pursue different goals and objectives, which require them to discuss and exchange information among themselves and to reach certain understandings about the decisions to be taken. Thus, many team leaders or their deputies are involved in building coalitions to get a decision implemented.

In this case, coalitions are defined as formal or informal alliances made up of team leaders or decision-makers aiming to support specific goals. Therefore, coalition building is a natural process of forming alliances between team leaders or even team members to support or impose a decision or activity.

In other words, a team leader for the imposition of a specific decision alternative must in some cases constitute (build) a coalition with other team leaders or part of the team members to support the adoption of the alternative.

Building coalitions obviously involves involving team leaders in formal as well as informal discussions with team members in order to convince and persuade them to support the desired alternatives.

The political decision-making model is based on the following assumptions:

1. *Plurality of actors and interests*: decisions are taken in a context where there are several actors (individuals, groups or departments) with different interests, objectives and values. These actors promote their own agendas, leading to conflicts and negotiations. Moreover, teams are made up of groups of people with different interests, goals and values. Team members often disagree on how to solve the problem, i.e. they do not understand or share the same goals and interests as other people.

2. *Access to information (incomplete and asymmetrical information)*: in general, the information used for decision-making is often incomplete, confusing or ambiguous. In this sense, team members may not have all relevant information, and some members may even have more information than others (information asymmetry). This can lead to manipulation or

strategic use of information. The attempt to use the rational model is limited by the complexity of the issues and the constraints related to employees.

3. ***Time and cognitive capacity limitations:*** team leaders do not have the time, and the mental (cognitive) capacity both to identify all dimensions of the problem and to process all relevant information. In this respect, decision-makers resort to formal and informal discussions with other decision-makers (in the case of work teams, even team members) to exchange information and opinions in order to minimize ambiguity.

4. ***Level of conflict:*** the decision-makers in a work team frequently engage in various discussions and debates about how to choose alternatives. From this perspective, decisions result from negotiating actions between groups and coalitions.

5. ***Limited resources:*** resources (money, time, staff, etc.) are finite and different groups compete for access to these resources. This competition leads to power struggles and trade-offs.

6. ***Power and influence:*** team decisions are influenced by the distribution of power in the organization. A number of employees in the organization with more power or influence may have a greater voice (influence) in the decision-making process. Power can be formal (position in the hierarchy) or informal (networks of influence, expertise).

7. ***Influence of the external environment:*** decisions within the team can or are influenced by external factors, such as political pressures, government regulations or market demands. The team often has to respond to these pressures in order to survive and thrive.

The political decision-making model is closest to the actual conditions under which most team leaders make decisions.

In this regard, studies have shown that some managers in high-tech industries, while attempting to use the rational decision-making model, were more likely to use coalition building to adopt alternatives (Doran & Gunn, 2002) .

The application of the political decision-making model is suitable for teams in which the decision-making process frequently generates conflicts (many people with different visions are involved in the decision-making process, who individually want to impose their own alternatives).

In summary, the table below (Table 7.1) presents the main dimensions and characteristics of the three decision-making models (classical decision-making model; administrative decision-making model; political decision-making model):

Table 7.1. *Main features of decision-making models*

The classic model	The administrative model	The political model
Objectives and problems are clearly and well defined	Objectives and problems are vaguely defined	The objectives are multiple and sources of conflict
Conditions of certainty	Conditions of uncertainty	Conditions of uncertainty and/or ambiguity
Information is fully available on the alternatives and the results of the alternatives	Information is limited to alternatives and the results of alternatives	The information is ambiguous and inconsistent about the alternatives and the results of the alternatives
Individual and rational, results-oriented choices that maximize	Choice that minimally satisfies the decision criteria	Negotiations and discussions between different groups and coalitions

(Source: Raboca, 2013)

In conclusion, the political model of decision-making provides a realistic perspective on how decisions are made in complex organizations, where power, conflicting interests, and negotiations play a central role. In contrast to the rational model, which implies a logical and objective approach, the political model recognizes that decisions are often the result of social and political processes.

On the other hand, also related to the type of model used in decision making, most specialists in the field recommend that the classical and rational decision-making process be associated with performance-oriented teams (organizations) operating in stable environments with a low degree of uncertainty (I refer here to both the internal and external environments of the team). In contrast, for performance-oriented teams (organizations) operating in unstable environments with a high degree of uncertainty (environments that require decisions to be made quickly and under difficult conditions), administrative and political models are the most appropriate models to implement (Fredrickson, 1985) .

8. TEAM MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

8.1. Defining mental health for a team

The mental health of a team refers to the state of psychological and emotional well-being of team members and the collective dynamics that support a positive, productive, and sustainable working environment. This includes a wide variety of aspects such as effective communication, mutual trust, stress management, resilience, and the ability to deal with challenges in a constructive way. The mental health of a team is not just the sum of the individual mental health of its members but also the way they interact and support each other to create a healthy working environment. Analyzing the mental health of a work team is essential to ensure a productive, sustainable, and balanced working environment. It is not only an indicator of each member's individual well-being but also a crucial factor influencing collective performance, team cohesion, and organizational success. This is why it is important to analyze the mental health of a team, presented in a narrative way.

In a world where the fast pace of work and external pressures are becoming increasingly intense the mental health of work teams has become an increasingly common topic of discussion. Think of a team as a well-oiled machine: each cog has a crucial role to play, and if one component malfunctions, the whole system can be affected. The same applies to a team. The mental health of each member is an essential cog that determines how well the whole group functions. When mental health is ignored, signs of burnout, chronic stress or frustration can show up in the form of internal conflicts, decreased productivity or even absenteeism. A mentally healthy team, on the other hand, is one where members feel valued, listened to and supported. They are more motivated, more creative and more willing to work together to achieve common goals.

Mental health screening is not just about identifying problems, but also about building an environment where people feel safe to express their thoughts and emotions. It is a process that involves open communication, empathy and concrete steps to support work-life balance. For example, a leader who notices

signs of chronic fatigue in the team may implement flexible working policies or mindfulness sessions to reduce stress. In addition, a team with good mental health is more resilient in the face of challenges. When difficulties arise, members are better able to find creative solutions and collaborate effectively without being overwhelmed by anxiety or frustration. This not only improves teamwork results but also contributes to a positive organizational culture that attracts and retains talent.

Therefore, analyzing the mental health of a team is not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic investment. It ensures not only the well-being of people but also the long-term success of the organization. Ultimately, a mentally healthy team is one that not only survives, but thrives, even in the most difficult circumstances. Therefore, team mental health is not just a "trendy" topic, but a fundamental necessity for any organization that wants to evolve in a sustainable and humane way.

In a structured way, the main key elements of a team's mental health can be considered as follows:

1. ***Level of open and effective communication***: a mentally healthy team has open channels of communication where members feel safe expressing their opinions, concerns, and ideas without fear of judgment or retaliation. On the other hand, effective communication reduces conflict and increases mutual understanding (Edmondson A. , 1999) .

2. ***Trust and mutual respect:*** trust is essential for collaboration and for creating an environment where team members feel valued and respected. Mutual respect among team members will support team cohesion and reduce tensions (Lencioni, 2010) .

3. ***Personal resilience and stress management:*** a mentally healthy team is able to cope with challenges and change without being overwhelmed by stress. Team members support each other in overcoming obstacles and maintaining a work-life balance (Reivich & Shatte, 2003).

4. ***Cohesion and team spirit:*** cohesion refers to the sense of belonging and connectedness between team members. A strong team spirit contributes to motivation, commitment and job satisfaction (Carron & Brawley, 2000) .

5. ***Recognition and appreciation***: team members need to feel appreciated for their contributions. Recognition and positive feedback increase morale and self-confidence (Gostick & Elton, 2009) .

6. ***Level of conflict management:*** conflicts are inevitable in any team, but how they are managed is crucial for the mental health of the team. A healthy team deals with conflict constructively, without ignoring or magnifying it (Deutsch, 1973) .

7. ***Flexibility and adaptability:*** a mentally healthy team is able to adapt to change and learn from new experiences. Flexibility contributes to innovation and creative problem solving (Edmondson A. , 2012) .

8. ***Work-life balance:*** a mentally healthy team understands the importance of work-life balance. Leaders should promote policies that support this balance, such as flexible schedules or mental health support (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011) .

Improving the mental health of a team is essential for a team leader for several reasons. First of all, a leader has a responsibility to create a conducive working environment that supports not only productivity but also employee well-being. On the other hand, a responsible leader who is aware of the impact of mental health on his or her team will take active steps to support employee well-being. This not only improves team performance but also helps to create a work environment in which all individuals can develop and excel. Below we present some detailed arguments for the importance of this approach:

1. Increase team productivity and performance: a team that has good mental health is better able to collaborate effectively, communicate openly and find creative solutions to problems. Stress and anxiety can significantly reduce performance, so a leader must protect their team from these obstacles.

2. Increased retention of talent and professionals: the mental health of team members influences their willingness to stay in the team. Employees who feel supported and valued are more likely to remain loyal, reducing the costs associated with recruiting and training new team members.

3. Increase innovation and creativity: an environment that promotes mental health allows team members to feel safe to share ideas and take calculated risks. This freedom contributes to innovation, which is essential for the long-term success of the team.

4. Develops organizational culture: leaders who focus on mental health help build a healthy organizational culture that values empathy, respect and

collaboration. This not only improves team morale but also attracts new talent that aligns with the values promoted by the team/organization.

5. Reduce absenteeism: mental health problems often contribute to absenteeism from work. Leaders who proactively address these issues can help reduce the number of working days lost due to stress levels or burnout developed by team members.

6. Developing or improving interpersonal relationships: a mentally healthy team tends to have better internal relationships. Open collaboration and mutual support can transform an ordinary team into a truly high-performing one.

7. Increased or improved employee satisfaction and happiness: team members who feel good in their work environment are happier, which directly influences the quality of personal and professional interactions.

Increasing the mental health of a work team requires a multidimensional approach, including interventions at individual, team and organizational levels. Implementing these evidence-based strategies can lead to a healthier, more productive and rewarding work environment for all employees. Measures to increase the mental health of teams include the following:

1. Promoting an open and supportive organizational culture

1.1. Open communication: a working environment based on open communication between team members will lead to team members feeling safe to discuss their mental health problems that reduce stress and increases resilience (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008) .

1.2. Involving leaders in promoting values related to organizational culture: leaders need to incorporate values and methods in organizational culture values that are conducive to increasing mental health (Goh, J., & Zenios, 2016) .

2. Implement employee assistance and support programs:

2.1. Access to counseling services: counseling programs and services play a major role and are effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression in the workplace (Attridge, 2009) .

2.2. Stress management workshops: mindfulness and stress management interventions improve employees' psychological well-being (Wolever, et al., 2012) .

3. **Work-life balance**

   3.1. ***Flexibility in scheduling: flexible*** work schedules reduce stress and increase job satisfaction (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013) .

   3.2. ***Regular leave:*** employees who use their vacation days report lower levels of burnout and higher overall satisfaction (Bloom, et al., 2010) .

4. **Recognizing and appreciating efforts**

   4.1. ***Positive feedback:*** acknowledging the work of team members, as a form of positive feedback, increases organizational commitment and reduces the risk of burnout (Saks, 2006) .

   4.2. ***Reward (motivational) programs:*** clearly, performance-based reward systems have a positive impact on morale and motivation (Kuvaas, 2006) .

5. **Burnout prevention and stress management**

   5.1. ***Workload monitoring:*** an equitable distribution of workloads significantly reduces the risk of Burnout (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010) .

   5.2. ***Regular breaks:*** short breaks during the working day improve concentration and reduce fatigue (Trougakos, Hideg, Cheng, & Beal, 2014) .

6. **Team building and social cohesion activities**

   6.1. ***Social activities:*** team building social activities improve team cohesion and reduce tensions (Klein, et al., 2009) .

   6.2. ***Friendly games and competitions:*** activities such as friendly games and competitions or peer support activities increase team spirit and reduce stress (Tews, Michel, & Ellingson, 2013) .

7. **Improving the physical working environment**

   7.1. ***Ergonomic Spaces:*** a comfortable and well-designed working environment has a positive impact on mental health (Evans & Johnson, 2000) .

   7.2. ***Relaxation areas:*** spaces dedicated to relaxation reduce stress and improve team productivity (El-Zeiny, 2012) .

8.2. Stress levels and burnout in teams

Workplace stress and burnout syndrome, especially in the context of a team, is a complex phenomenon that can be analyzed in several dimensions. These include individual, interpersonal, organizational and work environment dimensions.

Thus, team stress refers to a collective state in which members of a team experience tension, anxiety, or pressure as a result of common demands or stressors. It can be caused by unrealistic goals, internal conflicts, lack of resources, or an unfavorable work environment. Team stress affects not only individuals but also collective team dynamics and performance ((Cohen & Wills, 1985) ; (Westman & Eden, 1996)). On the other hand, team-level stress can also be defined as a collective state of tension or pressure caused by factors such as excessive demands, conflicts or lack of resources.

Team Burnout Syndrome is a collective phenomenon characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (negative or cynical attitudes towards work and colleagues) and reduced personal and team achievement. This syndrome occurs when team members have developed high and prolonged levels of stress, share experiences of overwork, an experience over a long period, a lack of resources or a dysfunctional work environment. Team burnout can be contagious (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000) , spreading from one individual to another through social interactions (Leiter & Maslach, 2004) . On the other hand, team burnout syndrome is a collective phenomenon of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreased performance, which can be contagious and is often the result of a dysfunctional work environment.

The link between burnout and stress is well documented in academic literature. Stress is often considered a precursor of Burnout, and the two phenomena are closely interlinked but not identical. The link between stress and Burnout is one of causation and progression. Chronic, unresolved stress is a precursor to Burnout, and Burnout is a severe and chronic form of stress that profoundly affects the health and performance of the individual and the team. A body of research argues that managing stress and providing adequate resources are key to preventing Burnout. Stress, as a phenomenon, is a physiological and psychological reaction to perceived demands that exceed the resources of the individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) . When stress is chronic and unresolved, it can lead to burnout,

a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) . Thus, a prolonged level of stress in the workplace, without adequate coping or support mechanisms, can develop into burnout. This process is often described as progressive causation.

One of the models that explains the causal link between stress and burnout syndrome is JD-R model. This model, among other things, clearly explains the link between stress and burnout through 2 elements namely (Figure 8.1): job requirements (demands) and job resources.
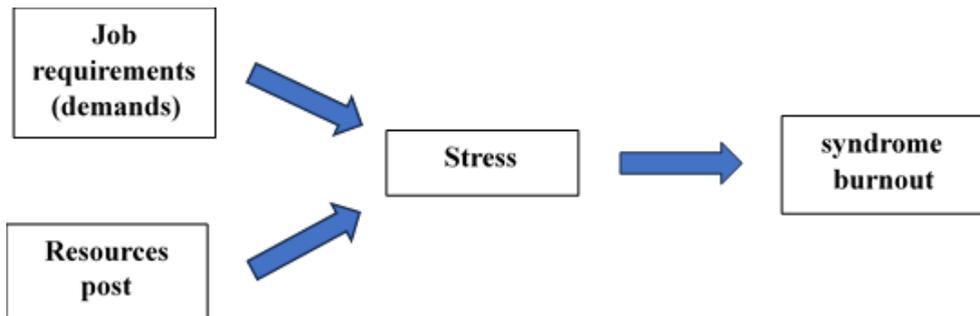
Figure 8.1. *Influence of job requirements (job resources) on burnout syndrome*

Thus, confirming the model, excessive job demands lead to stress, and chronic, unresolved stress leads to burnout. On the other hand, job resources also play a crucial role in the sense that they can either reduce the level of stress and prevent burnout or increase the level of stress and the occurrence of burnout. This model provides a useful framework for organizational interventions aimed at improving employee health and performance.

Related to stress we can identify a number of stressors, factors such as:

1. Individual factors: the personal characteristics of team members can influence how individuals perceive and manage stress, such as personality type, coping skills, and level of resilience.
2. Interpersonal factors: the quality of relationships between team members and interpersonal dynamics can contribute significantly to the level of stress: level of conflict, level of support given/received.
3. Organizational factors: organizational structure and culture, as well as internal policies, can influence the level of stress in the team, including work overload,

working under time pressure, and a lack of fairness and recognition of professional merit.

4. Environmental factors: the physical and psychosocial conditions of the work environment can affect the stress level of team members.

5. Management factors: generally, toxic or authoritarian (despotic) management or leadership styles can increase stress levels among team members (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007). Conversely, providing supportive and clear communication can reduce stress (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004) .

Therefore, as a conclusion, the level of stress and, consequently, the level of burnout in a team is influenced by a combination of multiple factors, namely individual, interpersonal, organizational, work environment, and, last but not least, management (leadership) factors. Among the most important factors are excessive work demands, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support, unfavorable work environment conditions, and inappropriate leadership styles. Academic sources argue that addressing these factors in an integrated way is key to reducing stress and improving team performance.

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